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KALINGA WAR TO UNIVERSAL PEACE

THE ODYSSEY OF EMPEROR ASOKA

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Vol. - I

Manmath Nath Das

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THE ODYSSEY OF EMPEROR ASOKA

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शीर्षक Kaling War to Universal Peace: The odyssey of Emperor Ashoka.

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गुरुकुल कांगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय
कृपया पुस्तक के ऊपर कोई निशान आदि न लगायें।

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वर्ग संख्या..... आगत संख्या.....

पुस्तक-विवरण की तिथि नीचे अंकित हैं। इस तिथि सहित ३०वें दिन यह पुस्तक पुस्तकालय में वापिस आ जानी चाहिए। अन्यथा ५० पैसे प्रति दिन के हिसाब से विलम्ब-दण्ड लगेगा।

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VOL. I

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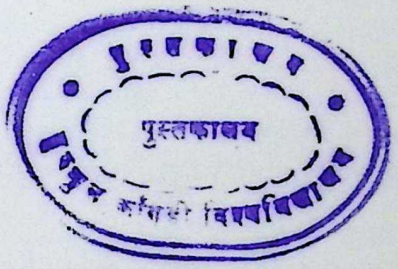

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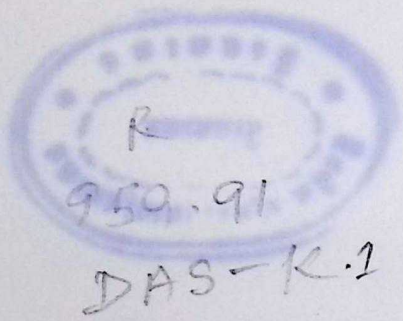

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Preface

The incomparable King Asoka left accounts of his magnificent reign on imperishable stone - of the epoch-making Kalinga War he fought, of the transformation of his being, of the mission of Dharma he took upon himself, of the unique dispensation he worked out as a ruler, and of his ceaseless endeavour to propagate the value of universal peace and human brotherhood far beyond the frontiers of his immediate domain. The Asokan Inscriptions, though brief in contents, speak eloquently about the time and the work of one of the greatest men of all times.

But the Text of the Inscriptions does not constitute a biography of Asoka. On the other hand, the history of his life is enclosed in shrouds of legends and traditions, well-developed in the Buddhist literature of India, Sri Lanka, Tibet, China and Japan. Some of these legends appear conflicting and contradictory in different sources and some are difficult to comprehend. At the same time, however, some other legends carry meaningful information about some of the major incidents of his life.

The problem is, can these legends be taken into the parameters or perimeters of biography! Parenthetically, can they also be kept out of consideration as of no merit! The epigraphic evidences are like the dry bones of a skeleton. Informations gathered from literary sources can add blood and flesh to the skeleton to make it look lifesome. Unless the substances of the established traditions are incorporated into the Stor of Asoka, the life of that remarkable King will carrty no thrillingness of romance, suspense or joy to the mind of men. It is the Legends of Emperor Asoka, in his role both as Chandasoka and as Dharmasoka, that stirred the imagination of millions of men and women of Asia and Europe for generations after his time. And, it is these apparently fabulous and sensational accounts which indirectly lent immense value to his known achievements as a warrior-monarch turned a monk-missionary.

It is worthwhile noting here that some of the Asoka Legends were so deep-rooted that they were accepted as nothing but truth. Two instances can be cited in this connection. According to *Asoka-avadana,* Asoka constructed a prison-house with torture-chambers, known as the 'Hell', where the victims were subjected to horrible tortures as in the real Hell of the God of Death,*Yama.* The fragment of the *Balapanditasutra,* inserted in the *Divyvadana,* even describes the modes of different torments. This legend developed into different forms in different contexts. But, most interestingly, several centuries after Asoka, when the celebrated Chinese Pilgrim, Fa-hien, visited the ruins of the Mauryan Pataliputra, he was shown the place where stood the infoamous prison-

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house of king Asoka, and he wrote in some details about what he saw and heard. More than two hundred years after Fa-hien, the more famous Chinese Master of the Law, Hiuen Tsang or Yuan Chwang, also saw a high pillar in Pataliputra which marked the site of the 'Hell' of Asoka.

Similarly, the Story of Prince Kunala formed an interesting episode of the Asoka-Legend, widely known in India, China and Japan. The Tokyo edition of the *Tripiṭaka* contained a *Sutra* in verse narrating the circumstances in which Kunala was deprived of his eyesight. The Japanese version took shape from the Chinese version of the story, and the latter was a follow-up of the Indian version, translated into the Chinese by Dharmamandi in 384 A.D.

The Kunala episode, though legendary, may have yet a basis of truth. Because, Hiuen Tsang, during his travels in India from 630 A.D. to 644 A.D., and while making a study of the Asokan Stupas, saw in Taxila 'the tope marking the spot where Prince Kunala had his eyes torn out by the guile of his stepmother'.

Some of the other legends, such as, Asoka's relation with Upagupta, his offerings to the Bodhi Tree, the conversion of his younger brother, the recovery of Buddha's Relics, his work as a beggar to collect offerings for the Sangha, and his gift of 'Half of the Amalaka', were too deep-rooted in the Buddhist belief.

The historicity of some of the greater achivements of Asoka, as described in the Buddhist literature, is beyond the range of doubts. For example, the Asokan Edicts may be silent about the missions of Mahindra and Sanghamitra to Sinhala, but, the history of the Sinhalese Buddhism rests on the facts of their missions to convert the people of that Island Kingdom. Even, as some experts point out, a fresco on the wall of an Ajanta Cave depicts the event. Similarly, the description of the *Mahavamsa* in respect of Nigrodha's part in converting Asoka appears plausible when the date of conversion tallies with Nigrodha's date of birth and age. A Kalinga legend speaks of Karuvaki, the daughter of a fisherman, who became a queen of Asoka; and the name of Karuvaki appears on the Queen's Edict of the Asokan Inscriptions.

However much may be the light thrown by the inscriptions, the literature and the legends on Asoka's life, there are yet some problems which have no easy answers. It is universally acknowledged that his great war against Kalinga was one of the most violent wars of ancient world like the Punic Wars between Rome and Carthage. The inscriptions vividly describe the casualties on the Kalinga side that "In the eighth year of his consecration the Beloved of the Gods, the King Priyadarshi, conquered Kalinga. A hundred and fifty thousands men were thence carried away captive, a hundred thousand were there slain, and many times that number died."

The immediate result of the War is described in the Edict in the following words: "Directly after the conquest of the Kalingas, the Beloved of the Gods became keen in the pursuit of Dharma, love of Dharma, and inculcation of Dharma. ...The chiefest conquest is not that by arms but by Dharma."

A question comes up — who was the King of Kalinga against whom did Asoka fight this first and the last war of his life ? Why did he not mention the name of his great adversary who offered a most determined resistence to the invaders ? Instead of giving the name of the enemy king, he invariably recorded the term 'Kalinga' or 'Kalingas' while referring to his conquest and its consequences. This is more intriguing in view of the fact that the Asokan Inscriptions contain the names of as many as five foreign Kings - Antiochus II Theos of Syria, Ptolemy II Philadelphos of Egypt, Antigonus Gonatus of Macedonia, Magas of Cyrene, and Alexander of Epirus - to

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whose courts were sent Asoka's Ambassadors of Peace. If the names of the distant kings could find place in his inscriptions, what prevented Asoka from engraving the name of his immediate neighbouring king ! It may be recollected here that the Gupta Emperor Samudragupta took pride in recording in his Allahabad Pillar Inscription the names of all the kings he defeated, as many as nine kings of Aryavarta and twelve princes of Dakhshinapatha.

Could it be possible then that Kalinga possessed no king at the time of Asoka's invasion ! In the days of Asoka's grandfather Chandragupta Maurya, Kalinga did have a king, who, according to the Greek Ambassador Megasthenes, maintained for himself a standing bodyguard of "60,000 foot soldiers, 1,000 horsemen, and 700 elephants." Soon after the death of Asoka also, Kalinga was ruled by the independent monarchs of the Chedi-Mahameghavahana Dynasty.

It is possible that Asoka invaded Kalinga during an interregnum when there was no king, and therefore described his battles as against a land and its people. This theory may be substantiated by the very nature of the war which was like a veritable people's war. Eminent authorities have calculated the number of the dead directly in battle fields and subsequently of wounds something like four hundred thousand. "Adding to these the number of deportees," says Radha Kumud Mookerji, "the total number of the army that fought on the battlefield would be at least 5 ½ lacs." It is gathered from the famous Hatigumpha Inscription of Kharavela of roughly a century later that the population of Kalinga in those days numbered less than 40 lacs. Taking into view the possible number of the male population of the aforesaid number, it is obvious that every fourth man of Kalinga perished or suffered as a victim of the invader. This proves the popular character of the struggle which Asoka faced in Kalinga.

There is yet another aspect of the conquest. Had the King of Kalinga fallen in the field or been taken a prisoner, what might have prompted the victor to carry away from the battlefields 'One hundred and fifty thousand' men as captives, unless it was meant to serve a terrible lesson of retribution to a stubborn race ! One is reminded of the Assyrian Emperor Tiglath Pileser I who, after the reign of the Hebrew King Jehu, overwhelmed Israel and carried away many of the inhabitants as captives.

That the Kalinga War was different in character from other wars of ancient times, involving not merely a regular army but also a larger number of men of the general society, is gathered from the Thirteenth Major Rock Edict of Asoka. It runs as follows:

"On conquering Kalinga, the Beloved of the Gods felt remorse, for, when an unconquered country is conquered, the slaughter, death and deportation of the people is extremely grievous to the Beloved of the Gods, and weighs heavily on his mind. What is even more deplorable to the Beloved of the Gods, is that those who dwell there, whether Brahmanas, Sramanas, or those of other sects, or householders who show obedience to their superiors, obedience to mother and father, obedience to their teachers and behave well and devotedly towards their friends, acquaintances, colleagues, relatives, slaves and servants - all suffer violence, murder, and separation from their loved ones. Even those who are fortunate to have escaped, and whose love is undiminished (by the brutalizing effect of war), suffer from the misfortunes of their friends, acquaintances, colleagues and relatives. This *participation of all men in suffering*, wieghs heavily on the mind of the Beloved of the Gods."

This passage of the repentant conqueror and his reference to the participation of all men in suffering are like eloquent testimonies to the heroic struggle of the Kalingans against the armies of invasion. The resistance by a king's army could not have been so intensive in character. The

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omission of the king's name and the high tributes paid to the brave sufferers lead us to believe that Kalinga had no king at the time of Asoka's invasion, and might be, was like an oligarchical or republican state of the ancient type at that particular point of time.

Asoka's War, conversion after the War, and his extraordinary mission that followed the War, are well-known facts of history. With the peripheral accounts derived from literature, traditions and legends, it is possible to raise the Asoka Story to a lively form.

This book is an attempt to depict the Story of Asoka in the form of a drama. The presentation of historical truth, as suggested by Arnolod Ioynbee, calls for the ascertainment of facts, the elucidation of the facts, and the artistic recreation of the facts in the form of 'fiction'. This last need is meant to carry the story of the past that is dead to the imagination of the people of the present.

Though the theme centres round Asoka, the first five chapters are devoted to the rise of the Mauryas under Chandragupta in order to provide a background to the main story. The primary aim in this venture is to carry an appeal to men's mind in regard to a remarkable individual who rose from the depth of violence to hold aloft the banner of non-violence; a man whose ideals enriched the civilisation of his time and of the times to follow, and which even enlighten the world of today in its quest for peace. The major characters emerge from ancient literature, the sequences of development are brought to the proximity of chronological order as far as possible, and the narrative aims to depict a cultural background.

I am deeply indebted to Dr. P.N.Chopra and Dr. (Mrs.) Prava Chopra for their yeoman help in editing the script and making it ready for Press. But for their powerful aid this book could not have been a reality in its present form. Their scholarly touch has added much value to the work.

My thanks are due to Sri Surinder Singh Sethi of the Rima Publishing House, Delhi, for undertaking the publication of this two-volume book.

In too short a time Sri Deepak Kumar Sahoo prepared the pictures for the book for which I am obliged to him.

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Asokan Inscriptions
(Brief Description)

The Rock Edicts of Asoka contain as many as Fourteen Edicts, proclaiming the Emperor's decrees, explaining his pious desires, as well as describing his chief achievements. Complete sets of these Edicts were discovered at *Girnar* near Junagarh in Gujarat, *Kalsi* in Dehradun District of Uttar Pradesh, *Yerragudi* in Kurnool District of Andhra Pradesh, *Mansehra* in Hazara District and *Shahbazgarhi* in Peshwar District of Present—day Pakistan.

Fragments of Rock Edicts VIII and IX were found at Sopara in Thana District of Gujarat.

In the Kalinga territory, two sets of Rock Edicts were discovered, one at the *Dhauli* hillock on the bank of river Daya in Puri District and the other at *Jaugada* on the bank of river Rushikulya in Ganjam District of Orissa. In both these places, the Edicts XI, XII, and XIII have not been inscribed. On the other hand, two special Edicts have been inscribed at each place. These are described as the Separate Rock Edict I, and the Separate Rock Edict II.

It is interesting to note that the Rock Edict XIII, which contains the detailed description of the Kalinga War and its effects, does not find a place in Asoka's Inscriptions in Kalinga. It is apparent that the Emperor did not want to perpetuate the memory of that horrible War on the soil of Kalinga. Instead, it is in his Separate Kalinga Rock Edicts that Asoka proclaimed some of the finest principles of his administration.

Minor Rock Edicts and Inscriptions of Asoka are seen at Bairat, Rupanath, Sahasram, Brahmagiri, Gavimath, Jatinga-Rameshwar, Maski, Palkigundu, Rajula-Mandagiri, Siddhapura, Yerragudi, Gujarra, Jhansi, Aharara, and Delhi.

Asoka's Pillar Edicts are found in Allahabad (removed from Kausambi), Delhi-Topra, Delhi-Meerut, Lauriya-Araraj, Lauriya-Nandangarh, and Rampurva.

Miscellaneous Inscriptions are seen at Barabar Caves, Rummindei, Nigali-Sagar, Sanchi, Sarnath, and Bairat.

At Laghman in Jalabad District of Afghanistan is seen an Asokan Inscription in Aramaic Script, and also one at Taxila in the same script.

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Asoka

(Story of Asoka in form of Drama Based on History)

The Seers of ancient India conceived of the entire landmass from the Himalayas to the seas as one geographical entity and named it as *Bharatavarsha* and all her men and women as Bharata Santatih. But, for ages, India remained politically divided into many independent states. At last there came a time when the vision of a Chakravarti-Kshetra dawned on the mind of a seer-statesman named Chanakya and a born hero named Chandragupta Maurya who combined their efforts to unite a larger part of the Indian sub-continent under one administrative umbrella. A great Empire thus came into being during the last quarter of the Fourth Century B.C. with Magadh as its core and Pataliputra as capital.

The Mauryan Dynasty of Magadh, founded by Chandragupta, gave to India a splendid and glorious epoch of ancient history. For the first time, the First Maurya united greater parts of the whole of geographical India to form an All India Empire. For the first time, too, the military might of India was felt outside her frontiers when Chandragupta defeated the Greek King Seleucus Nikator and forced him to surrender the territories of Kabul, Kandahar, Herat and Baluchistan.

The Second Maurya, Bindusara Amisraghata, was as successful as his father in maintaining the unity of a sub-continental Empire. Cultured and enlightened, he established friendly relations with some of his contemporary kings in the Greek world.

The Third Mauryan Emperor, Asoka, acknowledged as the greatest monarch of human history, began his rule as a fierce sovereign and an ambitious conqueror. He invaded the independent territory of Kalinga inhabited by a martial race, and fought one of the bloodiest wars of ancient times. "A hundred and fifty thousand men were thence carried away captive, a hundred thousand were there slain, and many times that number died," he confessed in his inscriptions.

In that moment of victory, however, at the sight of the ghastly macabre dance of death, the heart of the conqueror changed abruptly. Deep remorse overtook him almost immediately. A realisation dawned in him that the real conquest is not the conquest by the sword but the conquest of the heart. Out of the Kalinga War Asoka emerged as the greatest pacificist known to history. He renounced war as a policy of the State and devoted his life to a mission for Peace.

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Asoka turned to the Gospel of Non-Violence as preached by Gautama Buddha long before him. Appearing in his new role as a missionary-monarch, he began his campaign of conquest by Dharma—the Eternal Law of Morality, Virtue, and Righteousness.

Declaring that all men are my children--the Emperor worked ceaselessly for the material and spiritual happiness of his people. And, far across the boundaries of his vast domain, his Ambassadors of Peace propagated the principles of human brotherhood, universal piety and non-violence in several countries of the—then known Western hemisphere. Asoka even sent his own son and daughter by sea to Sri Lanka to preach the Religion of the Buddha — an example unseen in the annals of the kings.

The Western historian Vincent A. Smith rightly summed up the significance of the Age of the Mauryas in the following words:

> "The advent of the Mauryan dynasty marks the passage from darkness to light for the historian. Chronology suddenly becomes definite, almost precise; a huge empire springs into existence, unifying the innumerable fragments of distracted India, the kings who may be described with justice as Emperors, are men of renown, outstanding personalities whose qualities can be discerned, albeit dimly, through the mists of time; gigantic world-wide religious movements are initiated, of which the effects are still felt; and the affairs of secluded India are brought into close touch with those of the outer world."

This book depicts the story of Asoka, based on history, in form of a drama. The first-five episodes a background to the rise of the Mauryas and the remaining episodes describe the role of Emperor Asoka as a Chandasoka till his epoch-making Kalinga War, and as a Dharmasoka after his great transformation.

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Episode One

Commentary

Chanakya, a vastly learned Brahman Acharya of Taxila comes to Pataliputra, the Capital of the Nanda Kings, on invitation from the Pandits to receive honour from the ruling monarch, Dhana Nanda and appears before him in his court.

Scene 1

Nanda Court — **King Dhana Nanda, His Four Relatives, Courntiers, Pandits, Chanakya**

King Dhana Nanda is on Throne, Down the pedestal are seated the Pandits of Pataliputra with Chanakya on a central seat. Ministers and Courtiers are seated on another side of the Court. King's four relatives are seated on either side of the throne.

Chief Pandit — "Maharajadhiraj ! We the Pandits of Pataliputra have elected in our Council the learned Acharya of Taxila, Guru Chanakya as our head. We pray for your gracious approval of the appointment."

Dhana Nanda — "Is there no other learned Pandit in my vast domain of Magadh to adorn that position ? How could you elect a foreigner to be your head ? I wonder, how could the Acharya of Taxila come to my Court to receive recognition from my hand !"

Chief Pandit — "Your Majesty ! Guru Chanakya is known to all as a vastly learned Acharya of whole Bharatavarsha. In our collective decision, therefore, we decided to make him our Chief and invited him to come from distant Taxila to receive honour from Your Majesty's hand. Given this recognition, the Guru will be an excellent adviser to Your Majesty in matters if *niti shastra* and kingly virtues."

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King's First Relative — "Pandit ! First answer to His Majesty's questions — How do you bring a foreigner for this honour, and how does he come to receive it ? Furthermore, also answer to my question — How do you yourself venture to think that Emperor Dhana Nanda needs to be taught by this man in lessons of Nitishastra and Raja Dharma ?"

The chief Pandit looks fearful and remains silent. Chanakya looks at his face as also to the faces of others. Next, he stands up to answer himself.

Chanakya — "Rajan ! Can I answer the question myself as to how have I come to the Court of Magadh being a man of Taxila ? The Shastras say : Is there anything difficult for one who is able to overcome it ? Is any place distant for a Merchant ? Is any land foreign to a man of learning ? Can there be an enemy of one who speaks pleasing words ?"

(Sanskrit — "Ko hi bharah samarthanam kah duram vyavasayinam ! Ko videshah Suvidyanam kah parah priyavadinam !")

King — "Brahman ! Do you think yourself powerful enough to go to any land on earth ?"

Chanakya — "Yes, Rajan ! The power of the Brahman is his knowledge, as the power of the King is his army. (Sanskrit - Balam Vidya cha Vipranam Rajnam Sainyam Balam Tatha). A powerful king can lead his army to any foreign land ; a learned Brahman can go anywhere by the power of his knowledge."

King's 1st Relative — 'Do you mean to say that the power of a Pandit is greater than the power of a mighty king ?'

Chanakya — "Yes, Aryaputra, yes. In one sense it is. It is said that the king is honoured in his own country whereas the learned is honoured everywhere. (*Swadeshe Pujyate Rajah, Vidwan Sarvatra Pujyate*).

Chanakya takes his seat.

King's 2nd Relative — (*Looking to king*) "This is an insult to Your Majesty !"

The King looks angry. He turns his eyes towards a soldier.

King — "Let this proud Taxilan Brahman be made to be seated on floor. Let him get a taste of his proud proposition that I am honoured only in Magadh whereas he is honoured everything on earth."

A soldier advances towards Chanakya and pulls him down from his chair and makes him sit on the ground. Greatly humiliated, Chanakya looks at the helpless Pandits.

Chanakya — "Learned Pandits ! Tell your King, there is no greater disease than sexual lust, no greater enemy than ignorance; there is no greater fire than anger, and no greater happiness than knowledge. (Nasti Kamasamo

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Vyadhirnasti Mohasamo Ripuh : Nasti Kopasamo Bahnirnasti Janantparam Sukham).''

The Pandits look pale in fear. They neither look at the king nor at Chanakya.

King's 3rd Relative — 'Brahman ! Is it the kind of honour which you receive by virtue of your power of knowledge ?''

Chanakya — ''This is the honour one receives in the court of an unwise king. The Pandits and the Courtiers are accustomed to see such dishonour to others in their presence in the Court of Magadh, I hope. Let me therefore say : ''There is no happiness for subjects from an oppressive king, no pleasure from the friendship of a false-friend, no love from a wife without chastity, no satisfaction from a pupil who is stupid. (Kurajarajyen kutah Prajasukham, kumitramitrena kutahvinirbrittih ; Kudaradarayichcha kuto Grihe Rati, Kushishyamdhyapayath kuto Jasah).''

King's 2nd Relative — 'Stop pouring out your knowledge from Shastras ! Or, else, you will lose your tongue,''

The King laughs. The Courtiers laugh. Chanakya's face turns red in anger.

Chanakya — ''If one possesses no mind, what lesson can Shastras carry to him? What value is a mirror if one has no eyes ? (Jasya nasti swayam prajna Shastram tasya karoti kim ! Lochanavyam bihinasya darpanah kim karishyati !!''

King — ''Brahman ! You seem to have come from far-away Taxila to teach us some lessons. But, I think, after I see your obstinate behaviour, that you should go back to Taxila with a lesson of lessons which you have to remember for the rest of your life. You come for honour, but you deserve dishonour. Go back from Pataliputra with the satisfaction that you have seen the Court of the Nandas, have felt the majesty of my Kingship, have understood the power of Magadh and the wealth of Pataliputra. Go back to your little country with a feeling that Magadh needs no teacher from Taxila. The Pandits who brought you here in their thoughtlessness have seen you sitting on the ground at their feet. Let it be a lesson to you that none from outside is equal to the Pandits of Pataliputra, and if these ones thought you to be superior to them, they too should be replaced by superior Pandits.''

The Courtiers laugh aloud. Chanakya begins to show symptoms of uncontrollable temper. He looks straight at the King.

Chanakya — ''Let me utter a lesson before I go. Modesty and moderation sustain the virtue of monarchy, not the vulgar show of pride and vanity which spring from wealth and power. I foresee the doom of the Dynasty of Mahapadma Nanda. I pity the Pandits and the Courtiers of Pataliputra . I pity the subjects of Magadh. I pity the timid and the coward who suffer

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injustice out of fear. Sins and vices overtake a people when courage and self-respect vanish from mind. Let me say: If the king is virtuous, the subjects become devoted to virtues. If the king is sinful, the subjects become sinful, because they follow the examples of their king. As is the king, so are the subjects. (Rajani Dharmini Dharmistha Pape Papah Same Samah ; Rajanamnvartantch Jatha Raja Tatha Prajah)."

King *(looking to Pandits)* " I could order to behead him for his evil tongue. But I spare his life as he is a foreigner."

Chanakya "Remember Rajan ! No son of Bharatavarsha is a foreigner on the sacred soild of his motherland ! kings may have their frontiers. But people have no frontiers except for the Himalayas and the Seas. Try to be a wise King. It is better to have no kingdom, but to have a kingdom and to become a bad king is the worst of the sins."

King Dhana Nanda stands up in anger. All others stand up. Pandits tremble in fear. King looks at his soldiers.

King "Drag him out of the Court by his pigtail and throw him to the gutter. That is the honour he deserves."

Soldiers come to Chanakya. One soldier tightly holds his pig-tail and two others drag him out. The King and the Courtiers burst into loud laughter. Some ministers look sad and close their eyes. Pandits look miserable.

Scene 2

Palace Gate **Soldiers, Chanakya, People**

Chanakya is being dragged to the street by two soldiers who hold his arms. Chanakya's body is on the dust. The soldiers leave him near a gutter. Some people gather around to see the Acharya. Some laugh at his plight. Some others express distress and disgust. Chanakya looks around as he gets up from the dirt and filth and walks away.

Scene 3

Palace Courtyard **A Courtier, Royal Princes, Young Sons of Courtiers, Boy Chandragupta (Age 8), Emissaries from Simhala, Crowds of Onlookers**

An eldery Courtier of the Nanda Court and three emissaries of the King of Simhala are conducting a game of intelligence as a part of a good-will mission from Simhala to the King of Magadh. The King of Simhala has sent to the Court of Dhana Nanda a big iron cage containing a Lion, made of wax. It looks like a real lion. The Chief Emissary of the King of Simhala is

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conducting the show. The game is open to young princes of the Nanda royal family and to the sons of the Courtiers. A crowd of onlookers observe the game.

Emissary "Any one who can make that fierce animal run without opening the cage shall be acknowledged as an exceptionally talented boy."

One by on the royal children come near the cage to try to drive out the lion. The first prince pierces a spear to its body, but the lion does not move. The second prince throws an arrow. A third one throws stones. A fourth one shouts at the animal with loud screams. When the princes do not succeed, a robust looking soldier comes to the cage and hits at the tail of the lion with a long sword. As that lion does not move, the onlookers laugh.

At this stage, from the crowd comes out a boy of 8, Chandragupta, and runs to the cage with a piece of burning fire-wood. Without anybody's permission, he pierces the firewood to the body of the wax lion, and it melts away.

The onlookers clap.

Emissary "This boy could know that the lion is made of wax. He is intelligent indeed."

Courtier "He does not seem to be the son of any Courtiers. He is a street urchin. He is not entitled to join the game."

Boy Chandragupta looks at the face of the Courtiers with a sense of grievance. He turns his eyes to the Emissary of Simhala and looks to the sons of the Courtiers and the royal princes.

Chandragupta "Mahabhaga ! I am an urchin no doubt, and they are the princes and others are the sons of the Courtiers. I had no right to take part in the competition. But when I saw the failure of all, I thought of doing the work, otherwise, the respected Emissary of the King of Simhala would have gone back to his King to say that the boys of Bharat have no intelligence. Now, after I have made the lion disappear, he will go to tell his people that even a street urchin of Pataliputra can distinguish between a real lion and a wax-lion."

The Courtier looks angry. The emissary is pleased.

Emissary "Dear boy, tell me, how could you know that the lion is made of wax?"

Chandragupta "I could smell wax from the beginning and could see the glaze of the lion's body as that of wax images. And I marked the lion's thin ear melting when a small ray of sun fell on it."

Emissary "Excellent, my boy ! To me, you are an exceptionally brilliant boy. May God bless you."

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Courtier "What is your name ?"

Chandragupta "What use is it to know the name of a street urchin ! An urchin is known only by his work."

Courtier "Do you think I cannot know your name ? I can trace you and your parents in no time,"

Chandragupta runs away in lightening swiftness and disappears outside the Gate.

Scene 4

River Ganga **Chanakya**

It is evening. The sky is cloudy. Chanakya enters into the river Ganga and stands in knee-deep water. He speaks to himself in soliloquy while looking at the flowing stream of the Ganga.

Chanakya "Mother Ganga ! Is it not time that you devour with your high flood this demonic capital on your holy bank where rulers perpetrate sins and subjects suffer in silence ? Do you not see your sacred water turn red with the blood of the King's victims, be they men or women, old or young, Brahmans or Kshatriyas or others ? Does not the wind blow on your breast with wailing cries of the innocent ?

"Yet, you flow on and on in your enternal journey forgetful of what the emphemeral rulers do on your bank, how they thrive on their vices and forget in vanity the voice of the gods ! If you are so tolerant as a Mother goddess not to punish the evil-doers, then, Oh Mother, give this humble son the strength of mind to destroy the sinners, and make clean your bank to restore its sanctity !"

Chanakya dips his head three times and keeps standing with half of his body under water. In a sudden outburst of anger as the scenes of his humilation flash before his eyes, he trembles furiously and unties his bunch of hair on the back speaking aloud:

Chanakya "Oh Mother Ganga ! let this Brahman take his oath in your holy breast that until and unless the Nandas are destroyed, I shall not keep my *Kesha* (Hair) loose, and shall not tie them

He dips in the water again. Dense clouds cover the sky from corner to corner. Storm descends on the river. Heavy rains lash the water. Chanakya comes out of the river.

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Scene 5

River Bank : Nightfall **Chanakya, Old Woman**

Coming out of the river Chanakya is taking shelter under a big tree he finds an old woman in shabby dress. Heavy rains and storm sweep over the place as darkness falls.

Old Woman "Stranger ! Will you be kind enough to take me to my shelter nearby? I am lame. I cannot walk through the muddy road, already flooded with rain water. It is a deserted place inside the compound of a Temple which is in ruins. After begging for the day, I spend my nights there. Godwill bless you if you help me before darkness and storm deepens."

She shivers in cold and looks at Chanakya in fearful eyes.

Chanakya "Storms will deepen indeed. I also need a shelter for the night. Can I find a place inside the Temple?"

Old Woman "You can. Nobody lives there. It is an empty Temple."

Chanakya helps the old woman to get up. He extends his helping hand to her to walk through a slippery path.

Scene 6

A Minister's House : Interior : Night **Minister, His Wife**

A violent storm is raging outside. Inside a small room, a Minister of the Nanda King and his wife are in discussion. An earthen lamp burns dimly.

Wife "You call yourself a learned man! But, what value is learning if it does not bring moral courage to heart? Are you not aware that the sins of a King are equally shared by his Ministers? Why did you not stop the King from his cruel treatment towards an innocent Brahman?

Minister "How does it affect you if I share the sins of my King and prepare my patty to hell?

Wife "It very affects me ! I have to share your sin as your wife (*Ardhangini*) ! Please do something for atonement. Why not send your men to find out Chanakya Pandit? Why not go to him and fall at his feet?"

Minister "I am glad to hear your words to a timid husband as his wise wife. But, I have already acted in my own way. I am going to see him alone in this stormy night."

The Minister covers his body with a thick blanket and goes out.

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Scene 7

In dense darkness the Minister knocks at the door of a forlorn house. An old man, under thick cover, comes out. They walk forward in quick steps in heavy rains.

Scene 8

Temple : Interior : Deep Night **Chanakya, Minister, Pandit, Old Woman**

Inside the sanctum sanctorum of a ruined temple is sitting Chanakya before an earthen lamp. The old woman, now out of disguise,brings in the Minister and the Chief Pandit and goes out. They bow down at the feet of Chanakya and quietly sit down.

Pandit "Noble Acharya ! Every sane citizen of Pataliputra hangs down his head in shame for all that happened in the Court on this tragic day. But every one feels helpless to raise even a word of protest. We the Pandits have lost out voice. All the Ministers have lost their tongues. We live a life that is worse than death ! But for how long ! For how long shall Pataliputra endure this pain of viceful tyranny ?"

Minister "It is the misfortune of Magadh that no son of Mahapadma Nanda turned out to be good King. Each one is a disgrace to the throne."

Chanakya "Is there no scion of any earlier royal dynasty of Magadh to claim the throne?"

Minister "That is the tragedy of the Gangetic valley. As you are aware, Mahapadma Nanada after coming to the throne destroyed all the Kshatriya princes of all previous dynasties to proclaim himself as the Sarvakshatrantaka. None is left to stand up. None."

Chanakya "Let it be so. Let the Nandas rule on till their cup of sin is full. Then, Time will put forth its own man. Some day I shall see my Vow come true. Please have patience and wait till then. And, when the Time comes, join your hands with this Taxilan Brahman. In the meantime, foment discontent among the subjects. Oppressors fall when the People rise."

Minister "Discontent is there. Discontent will grow as days advance, unless of course, the King changes his character."

Chanakya "The Wicked Kings do not change because they never learn. They do not bend, they only break. The Nandas will never change."

Pandit "Guru Dev ! Forgive me for saying that the King's conduct is now being widely discussed. The Courtiers, Pandits, and some Ministers feel upset.

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Prominent citizens feel unhappy. The King's spies will know of it. They may try to harm you."

Chanakya — "Once dishonoured, I am ready for any harm to my person. Having been disgraced, I am already dead within myself. So, whom should I fear and what for? Yet, before sunrise, I shall leave this place of my dishonour. I shall be on my way to Taxila. I ask you now to go back to your homes."

The Minister and the Pandit bow down to take leave.

Chanakya — "May be, years may pass before we meet again. But, some day we shall surely meet. The Vow of Chanakaya will some day be fulfilled. I shall be back on that day when Pataliputra will receive me with honour. I have taken vow in the water of holy Ganga to destroy the Nandas and liberate the subjects of Magadh."

Scene 9

Outside Pataliputra : Early Dawn — **Chanakya**

In the twilight of the dawn Chanakya is seen walking through a hamlet outside the city of Pataliputra. He is passing by a spacious ground containg the hut of a hunter. Inside the fence are seen beautiful peacocks in the open. Chanakya's eyes fall on a handsome healthy boy attending to hunter's animals. He is Chandragupta.

Fearful of the peacocks, a cobra snake slips out of thick grass and makes its way towards the jungly path outside the fence through which Chanakya is passing. Before his foot fell on the cobra, an arrow strikes its hood and the snake coils into death. Chanakya looks to the direction from which came the arrow, and finds Chandragupta standing with a bow and arrows.

As Chanakya stands on, the boy Chandragupta goes out of his compound to the other side to play with other boys in a nearby field. Chanakya follows the boy.

Scene 10

Open Field — **Chandragupta, Other Boys**

Chandragupta and other boys are playing inside an open ground near to a forest.

Chandragupta — "Let us play today the game of King and Rebels. And, I become the King and you become the Rebels."

Boys — "Let it be a fighting."

Chandragupta — "I am your King, but a cruel King. You are my oppressed subjects. You find me alone in a jungle, unarmed. What would you do ?"

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Boys "We will kill you, kill you."

Chandragupta "Try then."

One by one the boys attack Chandragupta, but Chandragupta overpowers each of them by a show of extraordinary physical feat as well as mental wit.

Chandragupta "You fools ! You came to fight singly and you lost. Had you attacked me as one body, I should have lost. Now, the King will punish you. So, learn the lesson from your defeat that you should fight the enemy in unity."

One Boy "Oh king ! How can we have unity out of nothing?"

Chandragupta "You have asked a nice question. My answer to it is: Find out a brave one to become your leader. The Leader will unite you against the cruel King. You shall stand united behind your Leader. There can be no unity without an able Leader."

Boys "We shall play this game tomorrow."

The boys disperse. Chandragupta sits down under a tree, closes his eyes, as if in meditation.

Scene 11

Open Field **Chanakya, Chandragupta**

Chandragupta is sitting under the tree in meditation. Chanakya, who observed the game of the boys from outside, comes near to him in slow steps. When Chandragupta opens his eyes, he finds Chanakya standing near him.

Chanakya "Dear Boy ! I saw you play. I see you rising up from meditation. I bless you to be a worthy man. May I know your name?"

Chandragupta "I am Chandragupta. But, Mahabhaga, you seem to be a stranger to this place !"

Chanakya "Yes, dear boy ! I came as a stranger to Pataliputra and am going back as a stranger. But, I am no foreigner."

Chandragupta "Mahabhaga ! Are you the learned Acharya from Taxila who suffered insult from the King as a foreigner ? I heard of this from people while in the royal courtyard yesterday !"

Chanakya "You are correct, my boy. I am Chanakya of Taxila."

Boy Chandragupta falls at his feet and takes dust to put it on his head. Chanakya lifts him up and holds his face within his palms.

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Chanakya "Who are your noble parents ? Where do they live" ?

Chandragupta "Noble Sir ! Better you had not asked me this question !"

Chanakya "Why not my boy ? Being so brave and so brilliant a boy, why should you hid your identity?"

Chandragupta "Because of my poverty and misfortune ! It is no pride for anybody to talk of his parents when in wretched condition. I can say only this much that I live in the house of a noble Hunter who treats me as his own son, and I look after his cattle."

Chanakya "Who drove you to misfortune ? Have you no parents ?"

Chandragupta "Noble Sir ! Kindly take me just as a boy named Chandragupta !"

Chanakya "I am satisfied with your words. Now, tell me dear Chandragupta, would you like to come with me to Taxila where I can teach you arts of warfare as well as meditation ?"

Chandragupta "Can I believe my ears ! Can there a better fortune than to be a pupil of Guru Chanakya ? But, Mahabhaga, I can follow you to Taxila if only my guardian the Hunter allows me to go."

Chanakya "Chandragupta ! Take me to your guardian. I shall request him for his permission."

Scene 12

Hunter's House **Hunter, His Wife, Sons, Daughter, Chanakya, Chandragupta**

The Hunter, with his wife, sons and daughter receive Chanakya in front of his cottage.

Chandragupta "Acharya Chanakya Dev has blessed our house by his presence."

All members of the Hunter's family bow down at Chanakya's feet. Chanakya sits on a deer skin.

Chanakya "Noble Friend ! I am hungry. But I could not ask for food from you because a Brahman needs *Dakshina* after eating. I do not want to put you to that trouble !"

Hunter "Acharya Dev ! I can even offer my life to you as *Dakshina*. Kindly bless my family by taking some fruits."

The Hunter's daughter bring ripe fruits on banana leaf. Chankaya eats. Next, he extends his right hand towards the Hunter for Dakshina.

Chanakya "Noble Soul ! You have promised to give me *Dakshina*. I have to ask

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for one thing only. God has blessed you with several sons. Would you not offer me Chandragupta as a gift to whom you love more than your sons ?''

Hunter claps with joy.

Hunter ''Oh, Acharya ! You have appeared as a God--sent man in this humble hunter's home. Evers since I got dear Chandra, I have been cursing myself that I am unworthy of being the guardian of such a precious child ! Chandra descends from a Rulling Tribe, belongs to one of the Noblest of the Clans of our Land, but is a victim of mysterious fate !''

Chanakya ''''Ruling Tribe ! Noblest of the Clans !''

Hunter ''Yes, Chandra's ancestors belonged to the ruling race of the Kshatriya Moriyas of the land of Pippalivana which lay between Kapilvastu and Kusinagara. The Moriyas belonged to the Sakya Clan to which belonged Gautama Buddha himself. But, Acharya Dev, Fate drives great people, great dynasties and great men to depths of misfortune at its will. Chandra's parents were the victims of that cruel Fate. When I saw the child Chandra in extreme misery, I brought him to my house. Since then he is dearest to me. But, he is growing up. Staying with me, he at best can be a hunter ! But with you as his Guru Dev, who knows what he may turn out to be -- a Hero, a Saint, a Great Man ! It is his Fate that has appeared in your person to rescue the boy from Distress towards Destiny. It is God's desire.''

Hunter wipes out tears from his eyes.

Chanakya (*to himself*) ''Mauryaputra Chandragupta of the Sakya Clan ! How auspicious is my discovery of the boy ! Oh God ! Give me the Blessings to raise this boy as the Man of the Future, the Man of Destiny ! (*He looks to the Hunter*) Dear Friend ! God will bless you and your family for your giving away your dear Chand to me. One day he will come back to you. Let me now take him to Taxila to train him for his future life.''

Hunter's Wife (*weeping*) ''Mahabhaga ! Do take him with you in care. The King's men are searching for him for his misbehaviour towards the royal children last afternoon. Chandra does not know how to fear and thinks himself as a Prince. We apprehend fear.''

Chandragupta ''Maa, if the King's men come again, tell them that you have driven me from your house. Let them search for me elsewhere and everywhere.''

Chandragupta takes dust from the feet of the Hunter and his wife. He embraces the Hunter's sons one by one and prays Pranam to the Hunter's daughter.

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Scene 13

Lake Side **Chanakya, Chandragupta, A Cavalier**

Chanakya, in disguise as a Holy Monk, is walking swiftly with Boy Chandragupta by a lake side through a jungle path. He observes a cavalier riding swiftly towards them. He asks Chandragupta to swim and hide in the wild growths inside the lake. As Chandragupta goes into hiding Chanakya sits down in the posture of a YOGI and closes his eyes as if in deep meditation. The cavalier gets down from his horse.

Cavalic "Holy Man ! Did you see a boy going this way ?"

Without opening his eyes, Chanakya points his finger to the lake where Chandragupta is hiding half visible. The cavalier takes out his uniform and puts on a swimming costume. He keeps his sword on the ground and gets down to water. In moments, Chanakya gets up, takes the sword and cuts down his head. Next, he waves his hand to Chandragupta to swim back. As Chandragupta comes out and finds the dead cavalier, Chanakya looks at him and asks:

Chanakya "What do you feel of it ?"

Chandragupta "I see nothing but good in what my revered Guru Dev has done."

Chanakya (*to himself*) "Here is an obedient pupil who will never doubt in what I do and will ever believe me and obey."

Chanakya helps Chandragupta to mount the horse of the cavalier and finds him properly seated.

Chanakya "Chandra "Proceed by the forest roads towards the river bank. Other soldiers may be following us. I shall reach you in the ghat by walking. Ride quickly as you know riding."

Chandragupta rides fast. Chanakya walks in quick steps.

Scene 14

Forest Road : Near a Pond **Chanakya, A Cavalier**

Chanakya finds yet another soldier riding on horse and coming from a distance. He finds a washerman near the pond washing his clothes sitting on a big piece of stone. He comes near to him.

Chanakya "Look, King Nanda's soldier is coming to catch you. The King is very much annoyed with your community of washermen and wants to punish

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each and all. Run immediately to the forest and hide before he reaches you.''

The simple--minded washerman looks to a distance and finds a soldier on horse. He at once runs inside the forest to escape arrest. Chanakya puts on dirty clothes around his body, and sits down like a washerman and starts thrashing dirty linen. The cavalier reaches him and gets down.

Cavalier ''You, washerman ! Did you see anyone going by this road ?''

Chanakya (bowing down) ''Yes, a man was running very fast in that direction.''

Chanakya points his finger in an opposite direction and the soldier rides into the forest.

Scene 15

River : Inside Small Boat : Night **Chanakya, Chandragupta, Pilgrims**

A small boat is sailing westward in the river Ganges carrying pilgrims. Chanakya is sitting in the dress of a Monk. Chandragupta is sleeping near him. The boatmen are singing a song in chorus. Chanakya's eyes are fixed on the face of sleeping Chandragupta.

The river is in spate. The boat is moving precariously. Chandragupta gets up and sits cross--legged. He looks to the face of Chanakya.

Chandragupta ''Guru Dev ! You say, you will teach me the arts of warefare. But, why and what for ? Why not teach me Shastras !''

Chanakya ''I want to build you up as a Hero first.''

Chandragupta ''What do I gain thereby ?''

Chanakya ''My Boy ! *Virabhogya Vasundhara.* The Earth is for the Hero to enjoy. So, be a hero, and side by side learn the Shastras.''

Chandragupta ''Guru Dev ! My Preceptor the Jaina Muni teaches all men to think of the other world, the Siddhashila, not of this world. He says, there is nothing in this world for men to enjoy. Everything is false. He asks me to gain spiritual knowledge. He advised me to think of the ways of Renunciation from this age of life. Since the earth is unreal, I do not want to be hero to enjoy it. I pray, Guru Dev, kindly be gracious to teach me about the Eternal; teach me how to gain Salvation !''

Chanakya looks at the innocent face of Chandragupta in great surprise.

Chanakya ''Chandra, my dear ! Do not be misguided by these Monks.

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Boy Chandragupta Dissolves the Wax-Lion

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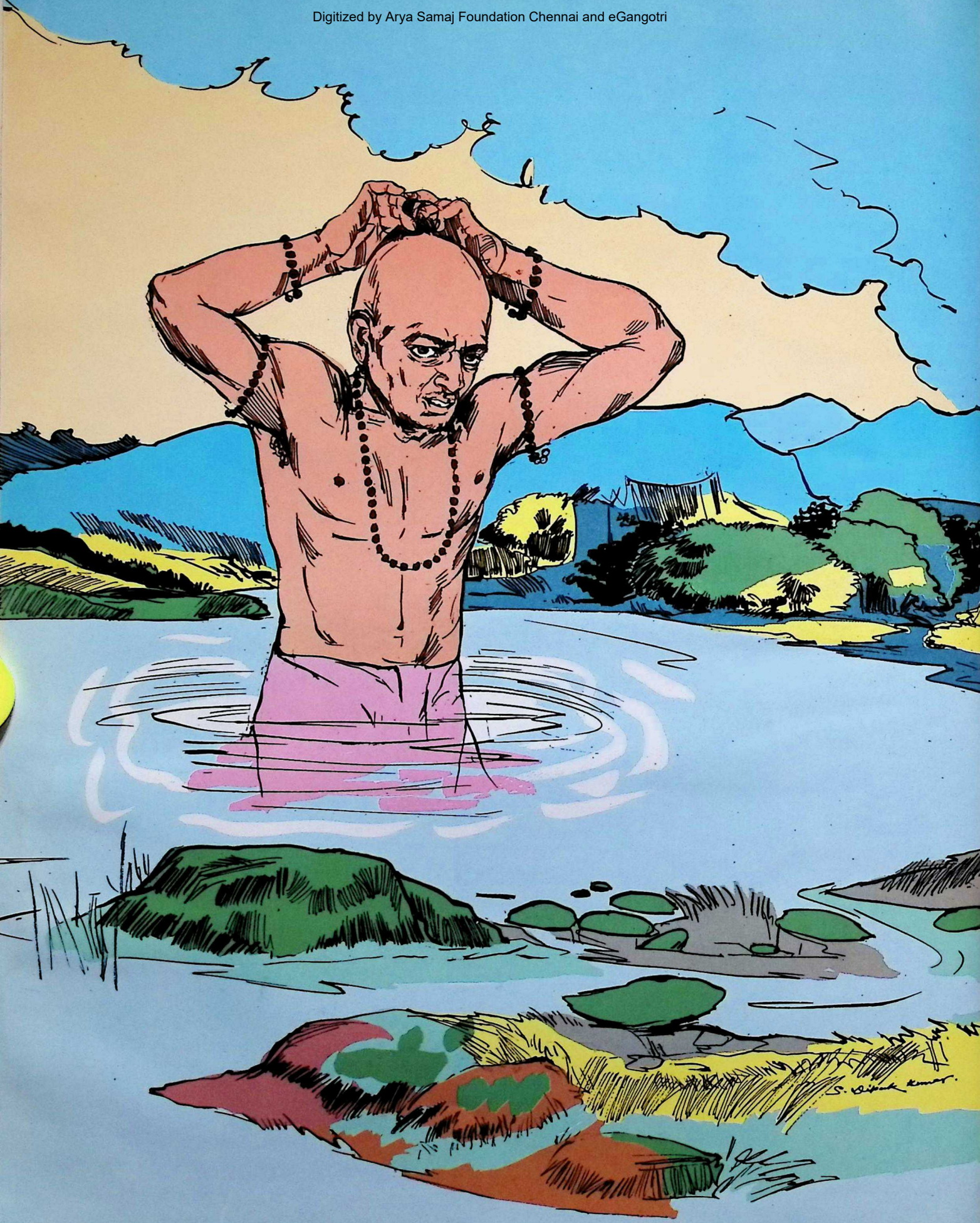

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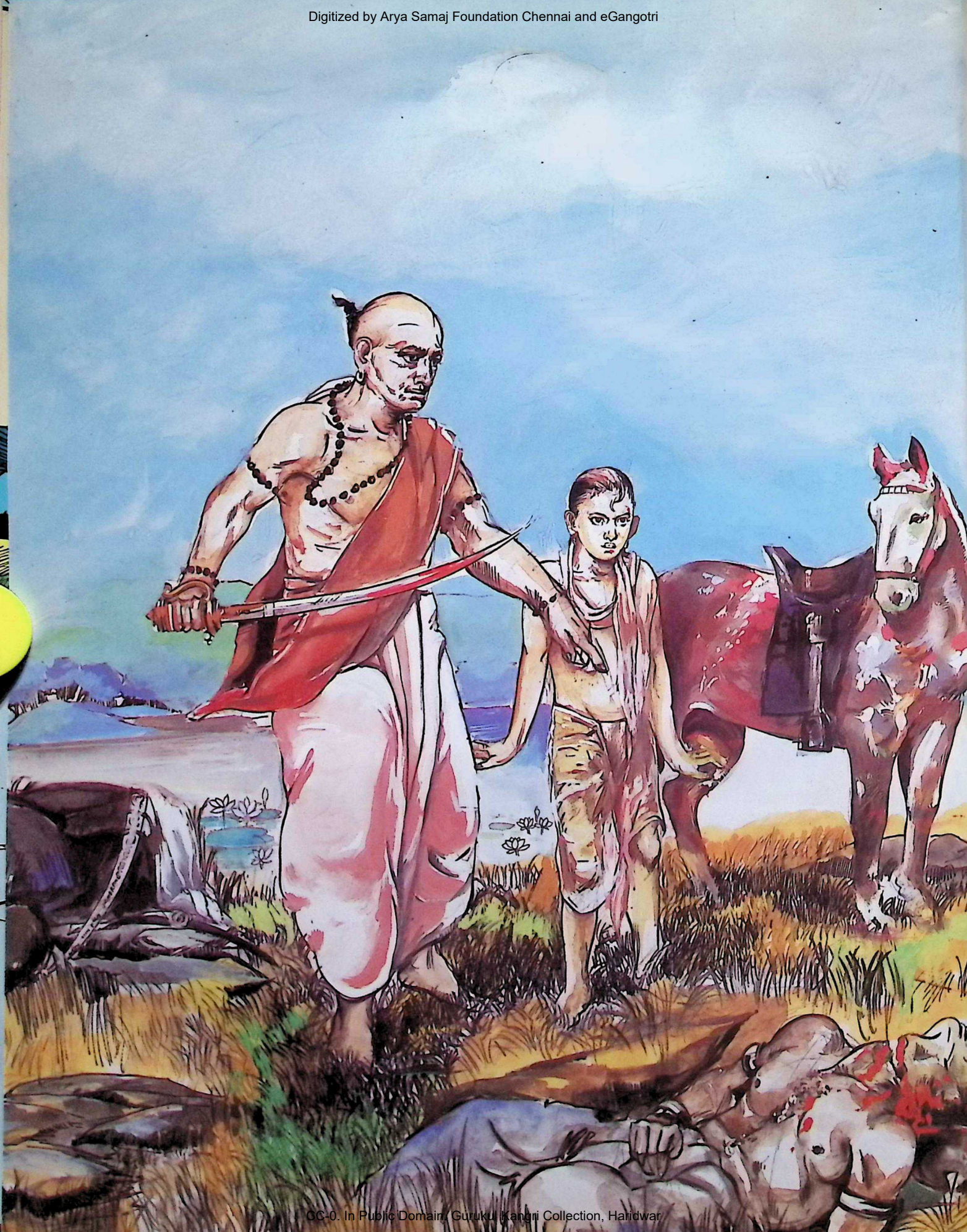

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They renounce the world themselves and advise others to do the same. They do not realise that the Life is for action, and that this vast earth is the real arena for that action. I shall teach you to be a man of action -- A *karma yogi*."

Chandragupta "Why should I be a man of action if I cannot carry this earth of action with me to the next world ? All my Karma will vanish with Death !"

Chanakya "I am sorry, my boy, the Jaina Muni has turned your young mind in wrong directions. Well, think for a moment ! If every man will turn away from Action or Karma, what will happen to this Earth ? Can mankind survive without food if people abandon cultivation? Can mankind survive without food if people abandon cultivation ? Can a child survive if its mother leaves the house and goes to forest ? Who will run the State if the King turns into a Monk ? Remember, my boy, Action or Karma is the basis of Existence."

Chandragupta "Existence itself is False, says the Muni."

Chanakya "No. Existence is the Will of God. God the Creator wants His Creation to exist through endless Action."

Chandragupta's face shows that he is not convinced.

Chandragupta "Guru Dev ! Kindly show me the Light to know the real meaning of Life."

Chanakya "Chandra ! You are just passing through the dawn of your life. As you grow in years, you will see more and more of life to understand its meaning deeper and deeper. You have now to know the value of Karma so that you make your life valuable to others. You have to know the value of courage so that you turn into a Hero to serve your country. So, for Heaven's sake, do not think of the next world when this world needs your Action. You should not think of Salvation when your life has just began."

Chandragupta "In that case, should a Time come in life to think of Salvation ?"

Chanakya "Surely of course ! A time may come in life to think of Salvation when the Phase of Action comes to an end and the Phase of *Janana* or Supreme Knowledge dawns. Then and then only -- after long years of life, you will be free to think of Salvation."

Chandragupta lies down to sleep. The Boat is sailing fast. The song of the Sailors continues. An earthen lamp flickers inside the boat. Pilgrims are asleep. Chandragupta falls into deep sleep. Chanakya is looking at his face of innocence with admiring eyes.

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Episode Two

Commentary

Chanakya reached Taxila with Chandragupta. There he trained the boy up in arts of warfare while imparting knowledge in other subjects. Time passed. Chandragupta grew up as a heroic youth of extraordinary potentialities.

Before Chanakya could set him against the Nanda Emperor, the Greek Hero Alexander descended on the frontiers of Taxila to invade the Indian territories. The King of Taxila received the foreigners with open arms with the hope that the invaders would humble his powerful neighbour King Puru whom he regarded as his enemy.

For Chanakya and Chandragupta it was an event of shock and shame. Alexander advanced. King Puru fought a relentless battle against him. Chandragupta followed the Greeks till at last he confronted the Conqueror in a daring feat of courage inside his camp.

Scene 1

Location
Chanakya's Academy
Exterior

Characters
Chanakya (Age 35)
Chandragupta (Age 8)
10 Boys of 8-10 Age

Action

Chanakya has reached the frontier city of Taxila with the boy Chandragupta. Near to the City is the Academy of Chanakya with thatched halls and houses, where pupils are taught in arts of warfare as well as in other subjects of learning.

This scene takes place in a vast open field outside the Academy Hall, surrounded by trees. Chanakya is teaching the art of archery to boy Chandragupta. He is being taught to aim at a target. The target is a fruit, hanging down in a thread from the branch of a tree, and is in swinging movement. About 10 boys observe the lesson.

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Chandragupta holds the bow and the arrow. Chanakya teaches how to aim at a moving object.

Chanakya — "See nothing but the fruit, calculate its movement to and fro, aim your arrow straight, count the moments, move the arrow as the fruit moves, and release the arrow when your mind grasps its speed to hit the moving fruit."

Chandragupta releases the arrow. It hits the fruit. Chanakya exclaims joy. Boys clap.

Chanakya — "Dear Chandra, Your aim and calculation are correct. Remember, Your real aim is not/the fruit, but at the future Kingship. You were born as the non of a King.

Your target should be, how to be a King. Shatras say *Bahu Beerjyam Balam Rajnan* — the strength of the King is the stregth of his arm. By the power of your hands you have to grow into a hero. For years you have to persevere to fulfil a dream."

Chandragupta raises his bow again. In that posture, he is shown turning up into a mandsome youth of 19.

Scene 2

Location
Academy Hall,
Exterior
Open Field

Characters
Chandragupta (Age 19)

Other youths

Action
Visuals

1. CHANDRAGUPTA DEFENDS HIS BODY AGAINST SPEARS THROWN AT HIM — FIVE OR SEVEN AT A TIME — WITH TERRIFIC FORCE.
2. HE DEFENDS HIS BODY AGAINST SHOWERS OF ARROWS AIMED AT HIM BY OTHERS.
3. HE DEMONSTRATES EXCELLENT SWORDPLAY WITH OTHERS AND SHOWS HIS SUPERIORITY OVER THE REST.
4. HE ESCAPES THROUGH ENEMY RINGS AND CIRCLES BY SPEED AND EXERCISE OF WIT AND VALOUR.
5. HE RIDES A HORSE AND MANIPULATES THE ANIMAL THROUGH CRITICAL ATTACKS.

FROM A DISTANCE, CHANAKYA OBSERVES THE VARIOUS FEATS OF CHANDRAGUPTA EXPRESSING PROFOUND ADMIRATION AND SATISFACTION.

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Scene 3

Location
Thatched room
Interior

Characters
Chanakya (Age 47)

Action

Sounds of war-drums and war-music from a long distance reach his ears. He raises his head and speaks to himself.

Inside his neat small room, adjacent to his Academy Hall, Chanakya is sitting alone in deep pensive mood. Sitting on a mat, he is turning over the palm-leaf pages of scruptures and muttering some words of hymns.

Chanakya — "So is coming the Greek Invader Alexander to desecrate the sacred soil of mother Bharat."

He Recites a Sloka :
"Gayanti deva kilagitakani,
Dhanyastute bharata bhumi bhage,
Swargapabargaspadamargabhute,
Bhavanti bhuya Purusosuratwat.
He gets up and speaks to himself :

Chanakya — "Are the people of this great land blessed enough to be envied by the Gods in heaven if they do not know to die for the sanctity and dignity of their Motherland I Accursed are the Rulers who are timid and fearful to face the Invaders ! Oh God, show me the path ! What have I to do ? What can I do ?"

He wipes tears from his eyes and walks towards the door of his room.

Scene 4

Location
Thatched Hall of

The Academy
Interior

Characters
Chanakya,
20 Young pupils
of age group 10-15,
In chaste white
Dhote

Action

Twenty young pupils are sitting on the floor and studying scriptures. Sound of war-drums is growing louder at a distance. They are murmuring among themselves in dreadful fear.

One Boy — "Foreigners are coming towards Taxila."

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Another Boy — "Our King has decided not to fight against the Invaders.."

Third Boy — "But the foreigners know no mercy. They will plunder our homes and kill our people. They may attack our Academy to destory it."

Chanakya Enters. The boys get up and bow

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One Boy — "Mahabhaga, what are we supposed to do now when the enemy army is approaching our city ?"

Chanakya — "Remain calm and composed and attend to your duty. At the same time, since you are the future hope of our land, do think of your country, of your city, of this invasion, of its cause and consequence. Shed tears, not in fear, but in sadness that such an invasion is taking place in your time, and before your eyes ! Think within yourself, why and how does it happen ! You have come to learn. Learn a practical lesson from this tragic event — the lesson of shame, and learn to overcome it by feeling patriotic towards your land and its people."

Second Boy — "Mahabhaga, our city people are in grip of fear. Our Parents are in fear. What can we tell them?"

Chanakya — "Tell them, by fearing death nobody can escape it. By fearing a calamity, nobody can face it. Courage is the only virtue with which to face disaster or death."

Chanakya walks out of the hall towards. The open field as the pupils sit down to study.

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Scene 5

Location
Academy
Exterior
Field

Characters
Chanakya,
Chandragupta,
Youngmen

Action

In the open field Chandragupta with other youths is practising sword-play. They stop their exercise as Chanakya comes out of the hall. The sound of the war-drums becomes louder from the distance.

The youths bow down before a sad Chanakya. Chanakya points his finger towards Chandragupta giving indication to follow him.

Chanakya proceeds towards the foot of a raised mound of high altitude which serves the purpose of an observatory to study Planets. Chandragupta follows him in slow steps.

They are seen climbing to the top of the mound in quick steps.

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Scene 6

Location
Top of the Mound
Distance Alexander, Generals, Greek

Characters
Chanakya, Chandragupta far down at Army. Ambhi, Generals, Army

Action

From the top of the high mound is seen the wider landscape of Taxila. To the east is seen the white gateway to the city in form of a lofty ARCH. To the west is seen dense forests through which a narrow long road is running towards the city gate. On distant horizon is seen snowy mountain range.

Chanakya and Chandragupta are standing on the top of the mound. It is forenoon with bright rays of Sun. Their eyes are fixed on the road through which the Greeks are marching. alexander is seen on a large black house with a white mark on its forehead. He is marching from the west. On his either side are Greek generals on horseback. Behind them are the Greek Infantry and Cavalry, partly visible through forests. In front are the Drummers, beating the drums and playing war-music.

in the east, near the City Gate, King Ambhi (A youngman of 25) is seen standing with his Generals and soldiers and elephants.

Alexander and his generals come to a half a few hundered yards from the gateway.

Chandragupta looks towards Chanakya who is pale and sad.

Chanakya — "Persians invaded us long ago. Now are coming the Greeks. Who knows, how many others will invade *Bharat* in future !"

He heaves a sigh of grief

Chandragupta — " Guru Dev, is there no remedy ?"

Chanakya — "Future will give this answer. As long as this vast Country remains divided and disunited, foreigners will take advantage of our weakness. Once BHARAT is one and her people are united under one rule, no foreigner will dare to invade."

As they stand and observe the scenes down below at a distance, camera turns to the location of alexander and ambhi.

Scene 7

Location
Taxila :
City-Gate

Characters
Alexander (Aged 30),
Greek Generals, Army,
King Ambhi (Aged 25),
Indian Generals, Army

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Action

Alexander on horseback has come to a halt. His Generals on his either side also halt.

General — "Your Majesty, King Ambhi has come with an army. We have reason to suspect his motive. He has kept an elephant force at a distance."

Alexander — "We wait. If he intends friendship, as he has proposed, let him come up to me alone to welcome me."

FROM THE CITY -GATE AMBHI PUTS HIS

Horse to gallop and Advances alone towards alexander. His generals and soldiers stand in attention at the city-gate with their swords and spears down.

Alexander on horseback advances a few yards. Ambhi on horseback says:

Ambhi — "Your August Majesty, the King of Kings, I have come to place my ancestral Kingdom at your pleasure. I accept you as may *overlord.* My Capital is open to you. Please do advance. I am with you."

Camera goes up to the mound to Chanakya and Chandragupta.

Scene 8

Location
Top of the
High Mound

Characters
Chanakya,
Chandragupta

Action

Chanakya and Chandragupta lift their eyes from the scenes below, and look towards each other.

Chanakya — "This is a day of ever memorable shame for our country and our people. The old King of Taxila had decided to resist the invaders to the last. Had he lived to this day, he could have fought for the honour of his people. But, the moment the closed his eyes, this wretched young successor, AMBHI, forgot his father's advice, and sent his emissaries to Alexander with proposals of submission and surrender to him. And, today, throwing to the wind all his dignity as a King and a man, he is welcoming the foreigners to his own capital. Ambhi does not realise what he is doing. By this disgraceful act, he has already blackened the face of Taxila and of Bharat."

Chandragupta — "Guru Dev, why does the King stoop down so low to commit this lowly act ?"

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Chanakya "That is a tragedy of this country's political life. Ambhi surrenders to alexander and Places his Kingdom at his disposal so that Alexander may fight against King Puru of the neighbouring Kingdom. It is the King's malice towards another fellow-King of his own motherland that prompts Ambhi to do this heinour work. I shiver to think of this. Instead of uniting with a brother King against foreign invaders, Ambhi wants Puru's destruction in hands of the foreigners. Nothing can be worse than this ! What a shame, what a tragedy, what a disgrace to all of us !''

Chanakya's eyes glow up. He trembles in his usual uncontrollable temper. In an emotional outburst, he raises his voice turning his eyes towards Chandragupta.

Chanakya "For 10 years by now, I have trained you in arts of warfare. I am convinced of your potentials as a hero. Think of this youngman, Alexander ! He became a King of a small country named Macedonia at the age of only 20 ! Within only 10 years since then, he has conquered the vast Persian Empire, the whole of Nile Valley, and many other territories. And, today, he comes to conquer India ! If an island of small size named Greece can produce a hero like him who conquers the West and comes to conquer the East, can not a great country like Bharat give birth to a hero to conquer the territories within her geographical limits ? Dear Chandra, think, think of this !''

Chandragupta looks puzzled and amazed. He looks on at Chanakya in a perplexed mood. Chanakya continues to speak.

Chanakya "At this hour of horror and shame, take a VOW before your GURU with the Sun and the Sky as witnesses that you should devote your life to a heroic mission — the mission to conquer, to avenge, and to unite the land ! What value is valour if not utilised ? What value is intelligence if not put to test ? What value is this lesson of shame if we do not rise up to pride to wipe out the blot from our country's face ?''

Chanakya Shakes his loose bunch of hair in his right hand.

Chandragupta "Give your gracious permission to me to go to Alexander and challenge him to a fight with me. I can prove to that proud man that every Indian is not an Ambhi. Let him, or Let any Greek General fight with me to test the strength of an Indian !''

Chanakya "Do not think or talk of things that are impossible to work out. Invaders or Kings do not take up that kind of challenge. Let them do as they please, let us learn the lesson and think of what we can do.''

Chandragupta "Guru Dev, I swear to do as you direct for any cause or mission. I swear to give my life for my country. At the moment, allow me to follow the Greeks to observe their warfare. I feel sure, from Taxila the Greeks will march towards the Kingdom of Puru.''

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Chanakya and Chandragupta Look Down towards. The city-gate. The Greeks are seen marching through the gate towards the city.

Scene 9

Location
Durbar Hall
of King Puru

Characters
King Puru (Age 55)
His Body is Robust, His Height 7 Feet,
he has Majestic Beard and Moustache.
Coutiers, Alexander's Emissary
Ambhi's Ambassador

Action

King Puru is holding his Court. Courtiers and Generals are seated in the Durbar Hall. An emissary of Alexander, accompained by King of Taxila's Ambassador, are taken inside the Court. King Puru is on the Throne.

Alexander's Greek Emissary takes his seat. On his behalf, King Ambhi's Ambassador stands and reads the message from Alexander.

Ambassador — "Our gracious majesty, the King of Kings, the Son of God Amon, the Greek Hero Alexander, invites King Puru to acknowledge the Conqueror's *overlordship* and to place his own Kingdown at the pleasure of the conqueror, and to enjoy the bliss of the Conqueror's Goodwill. Our Gracious Majesty is inviting all other Indian Princes to follow the example of the wise King of Taxila, Ambhi, and to do likewise, for their safety and..."

Before he commpletes his statement,
Puru get up, trembling in anger.

Puru — "You, Slave of a Foreigner, do you have the tongue to read this before King Puru ? Your King Ambhi is a disgrace to all other kings of Bharat. How did he dare to send you to my Court with that Foreigner with a message like this ? Go, and tell Ambhi that Puru is not a coward like him to lick the feet of invaders. Go and tell him that Puru can only bathe in their blood. Tell your King's master, that proud Greek, that I am ready to welcome him not in my Capital like shameless Ambhi, but in the very first inch of ground on my land in the Battlefield. I shall receive him not with garlands or gifts, but with my sword and shield."

The greek emissary gets up from the seat and keeps on standing. Ambhi's Ambassador takes courage to say:

Ambassador — "Rajan, please do remember that Alexander has an army of one lakh and twenty thousand soldiers. To that is added King Ambhi's Army. Your Army contains only thirty to thirty-five thousand ! Your decision to face the enemy in the Battlefield is like inviting sure death. My King, Ambhi,

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therefore, has sent his wise advice to accept Alexander's offer of friendship by surrendering your kingdom to him.''

Puru — ''Tell Ambhi, I shall fight even with Three Men only and die in battle rather live like him with dishonour which is worse than death. Let Ambhi enjoy his living death, let Puru die for deathless honour.''

Puru leaves the court. The court disperses.

Scene 10

Location
River Jhelum
Eastern Bank

Characters
Puru, His Generals,
300 Chariots,
200 Elephants, Infantry
Cavalry

Action
(Flash Scene)

King Puru's Army wait for the Invaders on the eastern bank of River Jhelum in military formations. Elephants with heavy and high howdas on their back stand in line touching each other's body and look like a massive stone wall. On either side of the Elephant Force are seen 4 Thousand Cavalry forces. Chariots and Infantry forces are positioned on the vast battlefield.

Puru is sitting on a huge Elephant and supervising the army formation.

Scene 11

Location
River Jhelum
Western Bank

Characters
Alexander
Generals, Army

Action
(Flash Scene)

Alexander, sitting on a 'black horse', is observing the army formation of the Indians. On his either side are Greek Generals. Behind them are Greek Cavalry and Infantry forces. Generals are in discussion with Alexander sitting on their horses.

First General — ''Your Majesty, for the first time in our Eastern compaigns, we come across a solid phalanx of war elephants with archers on their back, protected by the walls of *howdas*. In any direct attack, these ferocious animals will prove most dangerous to our Infantry Phalanx. There archers have an advantage to throw arrows on us from behind the *howdas*, and from a higher position.''

Second General — ''It will be impossible to cross the River Jhelum in Boats and floating logs of wood. Our Army will be exposed to arrows and spears from the enemy side.''

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Alexander "Let our Army wait for some days till I prepare a strategy of attack. Puru thinks of an immediate attack from us. Let him expect it every day and every night, and get exhausted. Let the Greeks rest while in preparedness."

Scene 12

Location
Night
River Jhelum
Western Bank

Characters
Alexander,
Greek Army

Action
(Flash Scene)

IT IS ASTORMY NIGHT OF HEAVY RAINS, ROARING CLOUDS AND THUNDERS. IN DEEP DARKNESS ALEXANDER LEADS HIS ARMY UPWARD THE BANK FOR A FEW MILES. TAKING ADVANTAGE OF A SMALL ISLAND INSIDE THE RIVER, HE CROSSES OVER THE RIVER FOR A SURPRISE ATTACK ON PURU'S ARMY FROM BEHIND.

Scene 13

Location
River Jhelum
Eastern Bank
Morning

Characters
Alexander, Greek Army
Puru, Indian Army,
Ambhi and his men

Action

Early in the morning, the Greeks fall upon Puru's Army in a surprise attack. Puru's elephants on river bank are unable to turn towards the invaders. Their heavy feet get stuck under thick mud, caused by heavy rains of the previous night.

Wheels of Chariots are also stuck in mud, unable to move. The Indian Archers are unable to fix their long bows on muddy soil before pulling their strings to discharge arrows.

The Greeks are in a position of great advantage. Their infantry and cavalry forces are on drier ground of the river bank. They attack in surprising speed.

Greeks aim their arrows at the body of the Elephants as they are unable to run. Their cavalry men attack the chariots which are immobile in mud.

PURU is on a huge elephant. He starts fighting desperately.

Battle Scenes Follow.

Scene 14

Location
River Jhelum
Eastern Bank
Morning

Characters
Alexander, Greek Army
Puru, Indian Army,
Ambhi and his men

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Action

Battle Scenes Continue. Puru is fighting desperately from the back of his elephant. Enemy arrows pierce his body at several places. Five to Seven big elephants are around Puru's elephant, playing havoc on the Greeks.

These elephants grasp Greek Soldiers by their trunks, and lifting them high up, throw down and smash them to death. Greeks are fleeing from the elephants.

Alexander sees the dismal sight of the death of some of his Generals. He feels very much apprehensive about the result of the battle. At this moment, AMBHI'S men supply instruments to the Greeks to use on the elephants. These instruments are a kind of sword curved like a scythe and known as choppers. Ambhi's men also supply huge axes to Greeks.

The Greeks hack the feet of the beasts with axes. They cut down the trunks of the elephants with choppers. As a result, the badly wounded elephants turn furious, and mad in anger, and create havoc in their own ranks. They thrown down their drivers to ground and trample over their bodies.

Puru throws a spear at Alexander's black horse from considerable distance. The wounded horse falls to ground with Alexander on its back. Greek Generals rescue Alexander retreats backward to a safer distance. From there he observes Puru's heroic exploits.

Alexander — *"What a fighter! How daring ! What a wonderful Hero !" He exclaims to a General.*

General — *"We have never seen a King who keeps himself in front of his army and fights so desperately with the enemy ! King Darius of Persia was miles behind his army while his soldiers fought with us. Porus is of a different calibre."*

Alexander — *"He is bleeding profusely. Attack him from all sides. His elephant is badly wounded."*

Generals Gallop Towards Puru.

The Greeks quickly surround the elephant of Puru and throw spears and javelins, aiming at the exposed parts of his body. Streams of blood come out from Puru's body.

Suddenly Puru recognises the brother of the King of Taxila among the Greek attackers, and throws a javelin in such terrific force that it pierces right through his back to his chest. He falls dead from his horse. King Ambhi, sitting on a horse near to Alexander, sees his brother's death in hands of Puru, but does not dare to advance.

Puru is losing enough blood. A spear strike his right shoulder and he is about to collapse when Alexander gallops to a nearer distance from Puru.

Alexander — "What the Plague ! What madness induced you to try the fortune of war with me, of whose exploits you have heard ?"

Puru — "Since you propose a question, I shall answer with the freedom which you grant asking it. But for your treacherous attack, and but for the Rain

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God's curse on me, you could have realised what madness induced you to try the fortune of war with me.''

Puru aims a javelin at Alexander. But Alexander quickly retreats to a safe distance. Puru fights on even in collapsing posture. Alexander sends King Ambhi to ask Puru to stop the battle. His face expresses deep surprise to see the flow of blood from Puru's shoulder.

Ambhi comes galloping near Puru and shouts:

Ambhi — *''The Greek King asks you to stop the battle. You are badly wounded. Your soldiers are dying inlarge number. It is time for you to call a halt to the battle.''*

Puru recognises the hated face of King Ambhi. He turns round his seat and with what strength his wounded arm can gather, takes a javelin, and throws it at Ambhi. He shouts aloud:

Puru — *''You Traitor ! Dare you say, I am wounded and therefore shall stop fighting ! There is still life in this wounded body ! My soldiers will fight till the last.''*

The Javelin Hits Ambhi's Armour. Ambhi Gallops Back to Alexander.

Puru, Still Fighting, Asks for water to his driver (Mahut) in intolerable thirst. The Mahut thinks that the king wishes to alight. He makes the elephant kneel down in usual manner. On seeing this the other elephants also kneel down, for they are trained to lower themselves when the Royal Elephant does so.

Alexander observes it. To him, It appears a golder opportunity to attack. He leads his cavaly to surround Puru's elephants. Greek foot soldiers run towards Puru to surround him.

Puru is collapsing. A greek general offers a pot of water to sinking Puru. But Puru throws the pot away, and falls unconscious.

The battle is over.

Scene 15

Location
Battlefield

Characters
Puru, Alexander, Greek Generals, an Indian Body-Guard

Action

Unconscious Puru is lying on ground with deep wounds. His Indian bodyguard is sprinkling water on his face and closed eyes.

Puru regains consciousness. He opens his eyes and looks around. He finds Greek Generals standing on his either side in rapt attention.

As Puru regains consciousness, his Indian bodyguard offers to him a pot-full of water. Without drinking it, Puru stand up. He looks to the Greek Generals without any expression on his face.

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Alexander is standing at a near distance. As Puru stands up, Alexander advances towards him in quick steps. Both now look at each other. Puru looks much taller than tall Alexander.

Puru — *"I have thought so far that there is no one braver than myself. Even now, I believe in what I say. Let me say, at the same time, that I regard myself highly fortunate for having fought with a brave man like you."*

Alexander feels moved to hear the statement of a bleeding Puru. His eyes express deep admiration for the courage of the man even in defeat.

Alexander — *"What treatment do you now except to receive from my hand ?"*

Puru — "Think of the treatment in accordance with the lesson which this day teaches — A day in which you have witnessed how readily prosperity can be blasted by Destiny. I could have won the battle, and you could have lost. Instead, you have won it, I have lost. That being the lesson, act as a King by treating me as a King."

Alexander is stunned to surprise. He whispers something to the ears of a Greek General.

GENERAL — "KING PORUS, IS THERE ANYTHING MORE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SUGGEST REGARDING THE TREATMENT YOU DESERVE ?"

Puru — "When I said `AS A KING', everything is contained in that expression."

Alexander forthwith comes very near to Puru, holds his palm and shakes it.

Alexander — "King Puru, Alexander knows how to honour a hero like you. I give you back your kingdom. Nay, More than that, I also give to you a territory from my conquered lands which is larger in size than your kingdom to be ruled by you. Let not posterity SAY THAT ALEXANDER COULD NOT RECOGNISE THE VALOUR OF KING PURU."

The Greek Generals lower their heads before Puru and present salute to the Indian KING. The Say "Hail King Puru."

An elephant is brought. Puru climbs to the *howda* under a royal canopy and the elephant moves out of the battlefield. Indian escorts follow the elephant.

Scene 16

Location
Night
Alexander's Tent
Interior

Characters
Alexander,
Greek Generals,
King Ambhi

Action

Alexander is enjoying drinking bout inside his spacious tent with his trusted friends and Generals. He is informed that King Ambhi wants to meet him. Alexander permits. Ambhi enters. Ambhi is in an agitated mood. Alexander looks angry.

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Alexander — "I understand the reason of your presence. You feel agrieved, I am told, for my dealing with King Puru. Is it true ?"

Ambhi — "Yes, my Lord, it is true. My enemies laugh at me. My own people laugh at me. They redicule me as a non-entity !"

Alexander — "Anything more to say ?"

Ambhi — "I welcomed you to my capital with due submission and utmost loyalty. I accepted your overlordship. Puru played the opposite role. He insulted your Emissary. He threw an open challenge to your authority and power. He fought against you in full determination to defeat you. In spite of all this, you honoured him, gave back to him his kingdom, and also vast territories conquered by you from the Republicans and the Tribes ! What face do I possess now ?"

Alexander (*Laughing aloud*) — "You possess your own face. Puru possesses his face. Alexander possesses his face. Do you get the meaning ?"

Ambhi remains silent. Alexander drinks from his cup, laughs, and speaks again.

Alexander — "Your Country and my country will remember for ever three names in connection with my Indian Invasion. Those of Alexander and Puru in one category and of Ambhi in another category. Be happy that you will ever be remembered in history !"

Scene 17

Location
Bank of River Beas,
Alexander's Tent
Interior

Characters
Alexander, 5 Generals,
Phageus

Action

Alexander with his Army has advanced as far as River Beas in the east. He has pitched Tents there and is preparing for future further advance. He is waiting to receive reports about the Lands in the Eastern Regions of India.

Alexander is sitting on his throne. Five of his Generals are with him. Another General brings in a Reporter named PHAGEUS.

Alexander — "Phageus, tell me about the Lands and their Kings which I would conquer next."

Phageus — "Your Majesty, beyond the Indus in the east, there are some small territories. But beyond them is the empire of the gangetic valley. The King of that Empire is xandrames (dhana nanda) who possesses limtless wealth. He has a powerful Army of 2 lakhs infantry, 80 thousand cavalry, 6 thousand war elephants, and 8 thousand chariots. His army is on the alert and ready to face the Greeks."

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Alexander looks at the faces of his Generals. They are sitting silent, without showing any sign of enthusiasm.

Alexander — "Let us now prepare for our real conquest of the Hind. We have to subdue that King Dhana Nanda and conquer the gangetic valley. I hope, you are ready !"

Alexander looks at the generals. The generals look at each other. But, they remain silent.

Alexander — "Tell me, if you are ready to advance upon the Ganges ?"

First General — "Your Majesty, May I be permitted to express an opinion on behalf of others. We have already discussed the matter among ourselves before coming to you. We have also judged the mood of the Army."

Alexander — "I give you the freedom to speak freely."

General — "Our soldiers felt depressed in the Battle of Jhelum with King Puru. They had never felt like that before in their countless battles with others. Puru fought only with 20 thousand infautry and 2 thousand cavalray against our huge force. We won the battle taking advantage of Nature's mercy on us, and by a surprise attack. Our soldiers feel unwilling to face an Army, many times bigger than Puru's Army. If your Majesty can inspire the Army to march forward, we the Generals are ready."

Alexander and the Generals are surprised to hear a din of commotion outside the tent where thousands of soldiers are gathered.

Shouts From Outside — "Thus far, no further; thus far, no further."

Alexander gets up in fury and walks to the door of the tent.

Scene 18

Location
Tent
Exterior

Characters
Alexander,
Soldiers

Action

Thousands of Greek soldiers in lines who are murmuring complaints against further advance for new conquests come to pin-drop silence as Alexander appears at the door of his Tent. They bow their heads, and lower their swords to ground, giving indication that they are in no mood to hear Alexander. For several moments Alexander stands in silence, observe the sullen face of the soldiers, and heaves a sigh of dismay.

Alexander — "I expected joyous *hurrahs* and cheers from my heroic soldiers at the prospect of our conquest of the HIND. Instead, I receive their mourning since."

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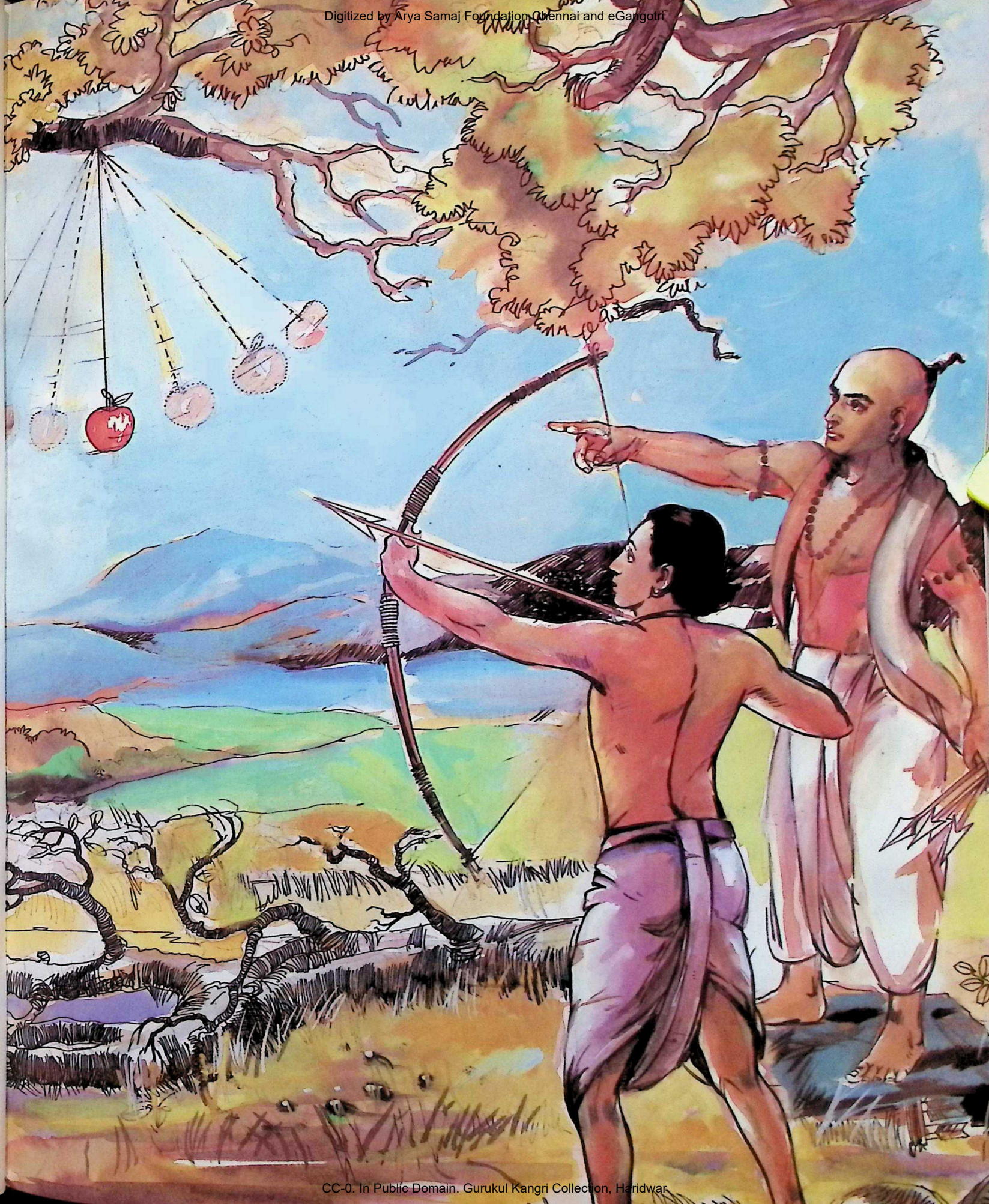

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Chanakya and Chandragupta See from Hilltop the Coming of Alexander

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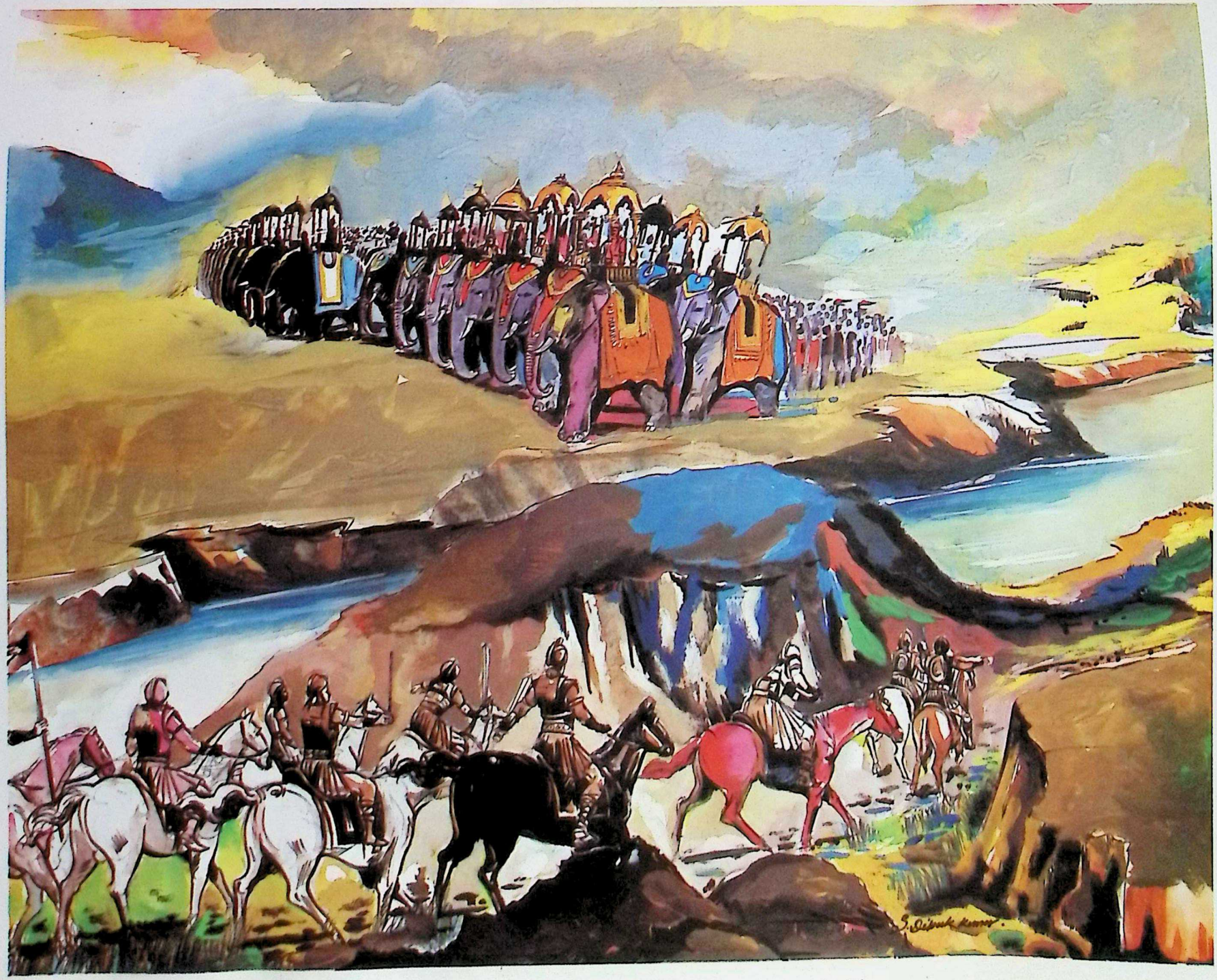

The Greeks See the Elephant Force of King Puru Across the River

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Battle Between Puru and Alexander

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The soldiers stand in stone-like silence. Alexander retreats forthwith.

Scene 19

Location
Alexander's
Durbar Hall in Spacious Tent
Interior

Characters
Alexander, Generals,
Army Captains, Guards

Action

Alexander is holding his Durbar to take a final decision on further advance towards the Gangetic Valley. Generals and Army Captains are sitting on the right and left sides of the raised platform containing the Throne. Alexander enters from the back-door and takes his Throne. All stand up as he enters. He has summoned the durbar to inspire his Generals and Captains to agree to march ahead. All sit down in rapt attention to hear the Leader.

Alexander — "May the Greeks realise how heroic will be our march upon the Gangetic Valley to conquer a people who are far more civilised, and an Empire which is the richest on Earth, richer than the Persian Empire which we conquered. May the Greeks realise how glorious will be our achievement for the Future to remember ! May my Generals cheer me up, and cheer my heroic soldiers at the prospect of our sure victory which all our 'God and Goddesses' wish for us !"

There are no cheers from the assembled Generals and others. Voices of prostest are

Alexander — "If we retreat without reaching the River Ganges, it will be tantamount to a 'confession of defeat.' Will it please our people at Home that the Greeks return from Hind without a victory, but in defeat " Will the posterity forgive us for our retreat from here ? With what face will the Greeks go back to their dear Land of. ..."

Before Alexander completes his sentence, a voice from behind the ranks is raised:

Voice — "Can the Greeks ever go back to Greece with life if they advance towards the great Gangetic Empire of Hind ?"

A furious Alexander looks forward to find out the face who dared to pass that comment. Noise outside began to grow. A loud voice from outside is heard:

Voice from outside — "Conqueror, do not try to drive us to Grave to satisfy your insatiable ambition and unlimited vanity. We have fought for you for ten years. No more and no further."

Another loud voice from outside is heard.

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Voice from outside "Be not sure of your victory over a more powerful people. Instead, think of Defeat and Disgrace of the Greeks in hands of Indians if we go further."

Alexander trembles in anger. He suddenly and unexpectedly announces:

Alexander "Generals, Your ingratitude robs me of all my pride as a conqueror. With a deep pain in my heart, I order for a Retreat from the Bank of Beas towards home. Let the world laugh at you and me ..."

Suddenly there is a Commotion at the door of the tent.

Scene 20

Location
Durbar Tent
Exterior

Characters
Greek Soliders, Guards,
Chandragupta (Aged 19)

Action

Pushing through the crowds of Greek soldiers, Chandragupta makes his way to the door of the Tent. He shouts at the Greeks.

Chandragupta "I carry an important information for Your King. Do not stop me. If you stop me, you will suffer from his hands."

Before Chandragupta is overpowered, he enters inside the durbar tent.

Scene 21

Location
Durbar Tent
Interior

Characters
Alexander, Generals, Captains,
Guards, Chandragupta

Action

To the surprise of each and all, Chandragupta appears in lightening speed before the platform, and faces Alexander who is about to complete his order of retreat. Generals rush towards him with naked swords. Chandragupta looks straight at Alexander and says.

Chandragupta "Conqueror and Hero, will it be heroic on the part of your Generals to kill this unarmed youth who has come to the Hero of Heroes to pass on an information which is most valuable at this moment of your mental crisis ?"

An astonished Alexander raises his hand indicating not to touch him. The Generals and guards retreat a few steps.

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Alexander "Who are you ?"

Chandragupta "A Son of Hind, a Native of the Gangetic Valley."

Alexander "What information do you bring for me ?"

Chandragupta "I have come to tell you that the Emperor Dhana Nanda of the Gangetic Empire is a King of immense wealth and immense power. But at the same time, he is well-hated by his subjects for his oppression, for his manners of character, and for his mal-administration. Do not miss this golden opportunity of your adversary's weaknesses. Please change your decision to retreat. Do not FEAR to invade Dhana Nanda just because he is an emperor."

Alexander "FEAR !"

Chandragupta "What else ! Your brave soldiers are proud of you for your victory over small Princes, Republican Chiefs of no importance, and Tribal Leaders of no regular army. But when it comes to the question of fighting with a powerful King, your Army fears to advance, your worthy Generals fear to advance, and you order for retreat forgetting your honour and pride ! Is it not Fear on part of a Hero and Conqueror like Alexander ?"

Trembling in anger, Alexander orders aloud.

Alexander KILL THIS INDIAN LAD.

Guards rush towards Chandragupta. In

Scene 22

Location
Durbar Tent
Exterior

Characters
Chandragupta,
Guards, Soldiers

Action

Greek soldiers promptly form circle after circle to surround Chandragupta. Snatching away a long spear from the hands of a Greek Guard at the Tent-door, Chandragupta jumps over the circles in extreme swiftness by playing POLE-VAULT.

Escaping from the Greek Circles, Chandragupta next falls upon a Greek Cavalier, snatches his sword, cuts him down, and takes to his horse.

As Chandragupta rides away, Greek Cavalry Men follow him in speed. Chandragupta drives his horse towards forests, followed by the Greeks on horse.

Scene 23

Location
Forest Road

Characters
Chandragupta on horse,
5 Greek Cavaliers

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Action

Chandragupta is riding fast through dense forest roads. Greek Cavaliers are throwing arrows at him from behind.

DENSE Forests obstruct the advance of the Greeks, but Chandragupta rides through

The Greeks return at last as Chandragupta disappears from their sight.

Scene 24

Location
Forest

Characters
Chandragupta

Action

Chandragupta falls semi-unconscious out of fatigue and exhaustion. He lies down under a big tree, perpiring and sweating. He closes his eyes. The released horse runs away, hearing the roar of a LION.

Scene 25

Location
Forest

Characters
Chandragupta,
A Lion

Action

Chandragupta is lying under the tree inside the the dense forest. A huge lion comes roaring towards him.

The lion looks at Chandragupta. It begings to lick off the sweat from his body and face.

Chandragupta opens his eyes. He finds the open mouth of the lion over his head.

The lion goes away slowly. Chandragupta mutters.

Chandragupta *"Is it an auspicious sign that a lion comes to wake me up to my senses!"*

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Episode Three

Commentary

Alexander retreated from India, leaving behind his Generals and Prefects to rule over his conquered territories, Emboldened by his encounter with the Greeks, Chandragupta returned to Chanakya. They discussed about the future of their country and set before them three great objectives, namely, to raise an Army, to exterminate the Greek Power in the North-West, and to destroy the oppressive Rule of the Nandas. The Unification of India became their supreme goal.

Scene 1

Location
Bank of River Beas
Alexander's Tent Interior

Characters
Alexander, Gnerals,
Greek Prefects

Action

Greek Prefects and Generals are standing in rows, as Alexander enters from the back door and stands facing them from a raised platform. The Greeks are ready for their retreat from India. Alexander looks sad and depressed. He stands to give his final instructions to his Prefects who will serve as his Governors of Indian territories.

Alexander — "My Prefects, with a broken heart, Alexander is going back from the soil of India. But, you as my brave Prefects are to stay as the Governors of my conquered Indian Territories from the Hindukush to the Indus Valley. Do remember that these lands have now become a part of my vast Greek Empire. Of course, the Land between the River Jhelum and the River Reas belongs to King Puru. He will rule it as an Independent King. The rest of the vast possessions shall remain as the Greek Provinces to be governed by you. Do not forget that you are Greeks, the proudest and the most heroic race on earth. Uphold the honour of your race by ruling the Orientals strongly and firmly.

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"I shall come back soon to conquer the whole of the Hind including the Gangetic Valley. I am going back to conquer the Western World — Rome, Carthage, and Spain. No sooner it is done, I shall be back on the soil of Hind. Gods have ordained it that Alexander shall conquer the world !

"I am taking the bulk of the Army with me to the Mouth of River Indus. From there shall I depart for Babylon, and from there to your dear land, Greece. On my way to the Mouth of Indus, I shall also occupy the Lands of the sibis, the malavas, the kshudrakas and the mousikanos. These territories of Hind should also be governed by you.

"You are further ordered to erect twelve huge and massive altars in honour of our Gods and Goddesses and also to serve as the monuments of Greek Victory. Let the people of Hind feel that the Greeks have come to stay in their land. Let them understand that the Greek Occupation is permanent.

"I wish you all success on the Soil of Hind. I bid you and the soldiers who are staying behind my hearty farewell only to see you again as soon as possible."

Senior Perfect — "We shall obey the command of our mighty Hero and Leader. We shall govern in his name, the conquered lands of the Hind."

All Prefects — "We swear, We shall uphold the honour of the Greek Race and of our Leader with all our strength."

All Others — "Long live the World Conqueror. Long Live the Greek Hero Alexander."

Scene 2

Location
Long Road

Characters
Alexander, Army

Action
(Flash Scene)

ALEXANDER, SITTING IN A CHARIOT, AND FOLLOWED BY THE ARMY IS PROCEEDING SOUTHWARDS TOWARDS THE MOUTH OF RIVER INDUS. BEHIND THE MARCHING ARMY ARE SEEN TRAILS OF FIRES AND SMOKES REACHING THE SKY FROM NEAR AND FAR DISTANCES.

Scene 3

Location
Chanakya's Cottage,
Interior

Characters

Chanakya, Chandragupta

Action

Chanakya is waiting to welcome Chandragupta in a mood of emotional happiness. Chandragupta enters and bows down at the feet of Chanakya. He is looking fresh, proud and heroic, presenting a smiling face.

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Chanakya — "Chandra, I have heard of your wonderful heroic exploits in the Tent of no less than a Persons as Alexander. I bless you for the severe blow you have delivered to the Pride of the Greeks. Let the Conqueror and his rustic hordes brood over the fact that as a fighter, a Son of Bharat, is far superior to the Greeks. Chandra, my pride today knows no bound that my labour to train you has not gone in vain. (He suddenly changes his mood and turns serious). But, yet..."

Chanakya lowers his face to look to the floor. Chandragupta feels surprised at Chanakya's mood.

Chandragupta — "Guru Dev, have I done anything wrong by doing that kind of deed in a moment of excitement !"

Chanakya — "No, nothing wrong, even though you exposed your life to grave risks of sure death. But, what value is that individual valour when the Greek Occupation comes to stay ! Your adventure means nothing ! Even the excellent heroism of King PURU has come to mean nothing ! Puru was defeated after all. And, today, even if Alexander has gone back, our countrymen are the subjects of foreigners ! Who knows, when may Alexander return to humiliate us further !"

Chanakya Turns Grave Once Again.

Chandragupta — "Is there no work for me to do now ? Does your blessing end with your momentary satisfaction for my encounter with the Greeks ?"

Chanakya — "No, my dear boy, no. I am looking far beyond my momentary satisfaction as I look at you ! I feel at the moment, Had you been a King !"

Suddenly Chanakya's eyes glow up. He raises his voice in emotion.

Chanakya — "Did I not tell you the other day that Alexander became a King only at the age of twenty ! And, You are a boy of twenty. Of course, Alexander became King as the son of a King. King Philip of Macedon. You are not that privileged, though you, too, were born as the Son of a MAURYAN King ! Is it not time for you to think that you can try to be a King by taking advantage of the disturbed condition of this region at the departure of Alexander ?"

Chandragupta — "Guru Dev, I pray, kindly tell me what can I do ? Why not you show me the path ? Your eyes can penetrate into the unseen future. Why not give me a mission to carry out ? If you do not show me the way, better I discard this life as useless and turn into a hermit."

Chandragupta shows a Mood of Despair and Continues.

Chandragupta — "Mahabhaga, you have asked me in my boyhood days not to think of Renunciation, but to think of this earth as an arena of action. What action is now left for me ? I am no King, no Prince, and have no Kingdom of my own like Alexander ! Why then did you train me as a fighter, if you knew that I have no one to fight with or no Army to lead ?"

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Chandragupta shows signs of mental tension. Chanakya places his hand on his head.

Chanakya — "Do not feel emotional, dear Chandra. You can be as great as Alexander, or even greater than that fortunate son of a great father. By dint of your heroism, you can do what Alexander has done. You have no Kingdom, but you have to win it ! You have no Army, you have to raise it ! Like Alexander, you too can conquer, conquer and conquer. The real Hero is he who begins from nothing to gain everything. In this sense, you can be greater than Alexander if only you can see your own opportunities !"

Chandragupta — "What opportunities can I see to work on, when I have none ?"

Chanakya — "None ! You have limitless opportunities to work on. You can find them, as I do, if you think of this time, and the situation created by time. Alexander has destroyed a number of independent Princes, several Republican Chiefs, and many Tribal Lords. Their brave soldiers are starving in their homes. They have no Leader and no King at the moment. Why not create a Band of Followers with these men ?

"The Greek Prefects with their soldiers have no popular support. They can never gain it. These rootless Rulers can be destroyed and driven out by you if only you can form an Army of your own.

"And, if you achieve this, vaster opportunities will open up before you. The Nanda Empire is being ruled by that worthless tyrant Dhana Nanda whose Crown will fall down like a rotten fruit the moment you invaded him !

"Are not these the Golden Opportunities before you ? Only a Hero like you can try to exploit these heaven-sent opportunities. Chandra, think of it, think."

Chandragupta's face brightens up.

Chandragupta — "Guru Dev, I see my chance. I see endless opportunities ! I can train these ex-soldiers of the Princes, of the Tribal Lords and of the Republican Chiefs in no time. I can form an Army of my own at once. But, as you say, these brave fighters are starving in their homes ! How can I ask them to join me if I cannot feed them like their previous masters ?"

Chanakya bursts into a cunning smile and says.

Chanakya — "When Chanakya suggests a theory to work on, he knows how to make it workable for practical results."

Chanakya claps. Six of his grownup disciples come in.

Chanakya — "All of you follow me."

Chanakya walks towards the backdoor of his room. Chandragupta and others follow.

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Scene 4

Location
Small Temple Exterior
Six Disciples

Characters
Chanakya,Chandragupta, Two Priests

Action

Adjacent to Chanakya's shelter near to the backdoor of his Room, there is a small Temple inside a jungle compound which looks like a prohibited area: As Chanakya comes to its door, the Two Priests open the door of the Temple. With two earthen Lamps in their hand, the Priests show the path inside.

Scene 5

Same Interior
Small Temple Exterior
Six Disciples

Characters
Chanakya,Chandragupta, Two Priests,

Action

Inside, there is the Image of a Big Siva Lingam. In front of it is a huge stone slab.

Chanakya "All of you put your hands together to remove that Slab at least partly."

Chandragupta and others try hard. The slab is partly shifted from its position.

Chanakya "There lies the accumulated wealth of my forefathers and of myself, received as gifts from the worshippers. Take out as much as possible to use for your purpose."

The priests spread a cloth as the youths bring out plentiful of gold pieces and tie up.
Chanakya looks to Chandragupta.

Chanakya "These are the offerings of the people to their God. May God bless you that you should spend God's wealth for the cause of this Land of the Gods.

"But, never think that the fighting ability of an Army should depend only on the money you pay for it. They need a Cause to fight for. It is your duty to hold that Cause before them. They also need something else. It is their devotion to their Leader. Nay, their Adoration of the Hero who leads them. Soldiers adored King PURU as a Hero and gave their life for him. Greeks adored Alexander as a Hero and fought his battles. May you earn the devotion of your followers by examples of your courage and deeds of heroism. Once you win their heart, they will win the earth for you giving their lives. Soldiers go by that character."

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Chanakya Looks Towards the Six Youths.

Chanakya — "I have taught you warfare not to join the army of a timid King like Ambhi. From now on, be the Lieutenants of Chandragupta and be the soldiers of Fortune. Swear before this Image of SIVA and before your Guru never to betray your Leader but ever to fight for him. Some day, you will rise to be his great Generals when he will rise to his Fortunes. I bless you all."

Youths — "We swear to be Chandragupta's soldiers to follow him as long as life remains in our body. We swear it before the God and our Guru Dev."

Chandragupta and youths bow at the feet of Chanakya.

Scene 6

Location
Forest
Village

Characters
Chandragupta, Youths, Villagers,
Tribal Dancers

Action

Inside a dense forest, the Tribals have gathered to perform their ritualistic Dance in memory of their Leader who has been killed by the Greeks. Villagers are gathered to see the dance.

The Tribals perform a Battle-Dance with spears in hand. An effigy of the Dead Leader is placed at centre. Around that figure, the Tribals dance.

Chandragupta and his six comrades alight from horses and sit down on ground to observe the Dance. As the Dance begins to the tune of the Drums, a Comrade of Chandragupta sings an emotional song to inspire them for revenge.

Dance is continuing when the noise of commotion is heard from a near distance.

Scene 7

Location
at a Distance

Characters
Tribal Women & Children, Wild Elephant,
Chandragupta, Others

Action

At a distance from the Dance Scene, village women and children are running in fear and screaming loudly. A huge wild 'elephant' is running at them in a mad manner.

Chandragupta runs at the Elephant. Fearful tribals run behind him. The Elephant lifts a man by its trunk and throws it down to death. It lifts a woman and tramples over her body. A tribal youth comes with a long spear to attack the animal, but is kicked by the animal to death.

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Chandragupta picks up the spear from the dying youth, and playing pole-vault, jumps to the back of the elephant. Next he pushes his dagger mildly on the head of the elephant as the *Mahuts* use their *Ankush*. The furious animal, not habituated to that, lashes at Chandragupta with its trunk and tries to throw him down.

Chandragupta falls down to ground. He quickly rises up as the Elephant tries to trample over his body. He rises to its back once again. He catches the trunk of the Elephant and holds it as tightly as possible. He shouts at the tribals to bring some fruits. As the fruits are passed over to him, he puts some fruits in its mouth.

The Elephant is finally tamed. It kneels down. Chandragupta jumps down. He rubs the forehead of the animal while giving it fruits. The Elephant rises up, lifts its trunk upward in a posture of salute.

The amazed Tribals shout slogans and cheers in favour of the unknown hero. Their leaders bow down before him.

An Old Tribal — "Wonderful, wonderful is your feat. Had you not been here in time, this mad animal would have surely taken the lives of many of our children and women. You are like a saviour !"

A Tribal Chief — "Surely enough, the Spirit of our Dead Leader has entered into your body. That is why you have been able to subdue this terrible animal which no man can do. How fortunate you are to be possessed by the Spirit !"

Chandragupta — "Dear Friends, if you believe this, you may be correct in your belief. Therefore, will you join me to kill the killers of your Leader whom you worship today as a demi-god ? I am out to destroy the Greeks. You are the bravest of fighters ! Join my ranks as my soldiers to liberate your lands ! Will you or will you not ?"

Tribals — "Oh, You Brave Man, We shall join you. We want to fight. We shall fight. We want to avenge the death of our Leader."

They shout cheers in unison. Women and children surround Chandragupta to see his face. Chandragupta embraces tribal youths.

Scene 8

Location
Greek Settlement

Characters
Chandragupta, Soldiers

Action
(Flash Scenes)

Chandragupta, sitting on that huge tamed Elephant and followed by armed bands, attacks a Greek Settlement inside a devasted town. The Greek Prefect of the place and his soldiers offer resistance, but are killed. Their settlements are destroyed and put to fire.

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Hundreds of people gather around Chandragupta.

Chandragupta — "You are the brave people of this small Republic which the Greeks conquered. You are now liberated. But, people of many other Republics and Kingdoms around your land are suffering the inhuman tyranny of the foreigners. (raising his voice) I am out to destroy the Greeks. I am out to liberate all my countrymen. Will you not join me in this sacred mission ? Is it not our duty to uphold the honour of our Mother Land ? Should we not come forward to give our lives to show to the world that the people of this land know to die as heroes ?"

People (*in chorus*) — "Chandragupta, You are our Liberator. We are with you."

A Leader — "Liberator, give us arms to fight ! Give us arms ! Lead us to battles. We are ready to die as heroes. Give us arms !"

Scene 9

Location
Night Tent Interior

Characters
Chandragupta, 6 Lieutenants,
An Informer

Action

Inside a tent, Chandragupta is discussing with his six lieutenants.

First Lt. — "Aryaputra, our army is too small to oust the Greeks. Our band of men can swell to a big Army if only we can have plentiful of arms and weapons."

Second Lt. — "Where is the money to purchase arms and to feed a big Army and to maintain them on permanent basis ?"

Third Lt. — "Whatever we brought from the Guru Dev is already spent."

An informer enters.

Informer — "All the Greek Prefects are already in alert. They are going to unite their forces to fight and finish us. They have sent messengers to Alexander who is now at Babylon and have asked for a bigger force to put us down."

Chandragupta — "Let us meet the Guru Dev to seek his advice. He will surely show us the way."

Scene 10

Location
Chanakya's Room
Interior

Characters
Chanakya, Chandragupta,
6 Others

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Action

Chandragupta and others are sitting at the feet of Chanakya. They are in serious discussion.

Chandragupta — "Guru Dev, we have no doubt in our mind that we can drive out the Greeks with ease if only we can raise a big army and provide arms to all. It is only with a powerful Army that we can also invade the 'Nanda Empire' after destroying the Greeks."

Chanakya — "I am greatly pleased to see your courage and confidence. You have already liberated a large territory from the occupation of the Greeks. You have to immediately appoint your own officers to govern that area. Otherwise, all your efforts will go in vain."

Chanakya Develops Serious Mood. He Speaks Again.

Chanakya — "No great object can be achieved without wealth and resources."

Chandragupta — "You have understood our problems before we dared to raise it."

Chanakya — "Yes, I have, And, I have thought over it. My boys, You can achieve miracles if only you can plunder the unlimited wealth, hidden at a most dangerous and difficult place. But, I am not going to push you to risks of death by disclosing to you the place of the hidden wealth."

Chandragupta and others look to Chanakya in surprise.

Chandragupta — "Mahabhaga, You have set us to play our Game with Death. Yet, do you still think that we are afraid of Death ? Can we fulfil your Mission as cowards ? Whatever be the place and however dangerous, we shall still try to plunder the hidden wealth."

Chanakya — "No, Chandragupta, I do not think that you are afraid of Death. A Hero has to face Death many times in his life. But it is onething to be a Hero in the battlefield, another thing to be a Hero for mean works like plundering or looting."

Chandragupta — "Guru Dev, Did you not teach us that 'end justifies the means'. If our 'end' is the noble cause of Bharat, we may adopt any means to achieve the 'end,' even if they are plunder, loot or killing. Be merciful to us, and tell us the Place of the Hidden Wealth."

Chanakya — "I appreciate what you say. But still think thrice if you can achieve the impossible ! Late Samrat 'Mahapadma Nanda' had hoarded incalculable amount of wealth at some unknown place. It is a place known only to his successor King and an old retired Minister. The place is well-guarded, but the Guards are not aware of the treasure. If a determined band of your soldiers can attack the place in dead of night in a daring feat of adventure, you may get at it."

Chanakya takes from his chest a silver ring containing a symbol.

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Chanakya "Dear Chandra, aware of danger I have to yet say that you have to lead the difficult mission.Meet the old minister and show to him the Ring. He was the only Minister who wept for me when I was humiliated in the Nanda Court, and who met me that night. He will tell you the location of the Treasure. Of late, he has sworn vengeance against Dhana Nanda, and has sent to me his promise to help to fulfil my vow."

Chanakya summons Chandragupta nearer to him and whispers in his ears the name of the old minister and gives to him the ring of identity.

Scene 11

Location
Highway

Characters
Chandragupta, Soldiers

Action

Chandragupta and a band of 500 brave men in disguise as merchants are seen riding towards Pataliputra. Somewhere on the highway the split into groups and ride separately.

Another big group of soldiers which is seen behind, halts at a particular point and stays there.

Scene 12

Location
Highway

Characters
Chandragupta, Soldiers

Action

Chandragupta and his men take shelter in a forest inside a rock-cut cave, not far from Pataliputra.

Chandragupta "You are to wait here till I come back. It may take a few days. I shall be back only when the strategy of attack is finalised."

Scene 13

Location
Street of Pataliputra

Characters
Chandragupta,
Drummers,
People

Action

Drummers are walking in the streets of Pataliputra beating their drums to attract public attention. Crowds of people gather round them as one of the drummers announces the royal

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order. Chandragupta, disguised as a trader, is seen among the people.

Drummer — "Our Great Monarch has decided to select a very brave and strong person to appoint him to a position of bold responsibility. The selection will take place tomorrow in the monrning hours on the Army Ground. Any Youth, who may feel bold enough to compete, may try his luck."

Scen 14

Location
Night
Minister's House
Interior

Characters
Old Minister,
Chandragupta

Action

Inside a small room, the 'old and dying minister' is lying on his sick bed. It is the same man who had met CHANAKYA in the night after Chanakya's humiliation in the 'Nanda Court'. Chandragupta enters in disguise as an old lame Vaidya with medicine herbs in his bag. On entering, he shows the Ring of Chanakya.

Minister — "I wonder, how could you come here avoiding the suspicion of the Guards at the Gate. I was waiting for Acharya Chanakya's man. You have come in time. My moments are numbered. The King's men have killed my only son on suspicion that I may tell him the secret location of the hidden wealth before my death. I was Oath-Bound in God's Name not to disclose it to any body, but, yet, they suspected. After killing my son, they have administered slow poison to me for my early death."

He writhes in agony.

Chandragupta — "You Venerable Soul ! Are you prepared to break your Oath which you took in God's Name ?"

Minister — "It is for the God to judge my Sin ! To me, it will be a sin on my part if I do not avenge the death of my innocent son, who made me to swear before breathing his last that I must break my Oath. If the King committed Sin on suspicion, God will forgive me if I work to punish the Sinner by breaking my Oath."

He weeps in distress and in pain.

Chandragupta — "Venerable Sire, I feel deeply interested to hear the story of Mahapadma's hidden wealth. But there is no time. The Guards have permitted me a few moments only to give you the medicine. Kindly tell me the location."

Minister — "I hope, you have your armed men with you. But, the secret tunnel to the location is within the 'palace'. Unless one is recognised as a King's Man, he can not come anywhere nearer to the tunnel door."

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Chandragupta becomes thoughtful.

Chandragupta "Tomorrow the King is going to select a strong man for a Royal job. If I try, I can win the Test. What is your kind advice ?"

Minister "An excellent idea ! But, can you win the Test ? Better, take a chance and try. If you succeed, God may bless you to reach the place."

Chandragupta takes leave of the minister.

Scene 15

Location
Army Ground

Characters
King Dhana Nanda,
3 Generals,
Chandragupta,
10 Competitors,
A Wrestler

Action

King Dhana Nanda is observing the test from under a Canopy. Three Generals are conducting the Test. Ten able-bodied youngmen including Chandragupta are standing in a line. At a distance are seen a tiger inside a cage, Circles of Thick sharp thorns, and a fat wrestler.

General "Who can go to the Tiger and open its cage ? Try !"

While nine youngmen hesitate, Chandragupta runs near the cage. He fixes his eyes straight on the eyes of the tiger and is about to open the door to fight with the animal, The General cries "Halt". Chandragupta returns.

General "Who can jump through the Rings of Thorn ? Try !"

Some youngmen run towards the rings but stop jumping in fear. Two jump through and come out bleeding. After passing through two rings only. Chandragupta runs through all the five rings, though bleeding.

General "Who can fight with the Wrestler ? Try !"

The first youth goes to the wrestler who lifts him up and throws him down. The second youth goes to the wrestler who gives him a severe push to fall flat. Three more try, and suffer badly. Chandragupta goes, the wrestler extends his hand to catch him. Chandragupta catches his right arms tightly, and quickly twists it to make the wrestler bend and fall flat on ground.

General "The Test is over."

The general looks at Chandragupta, summons him nearer, asks his name. Chandragupta mutters a false name and address.

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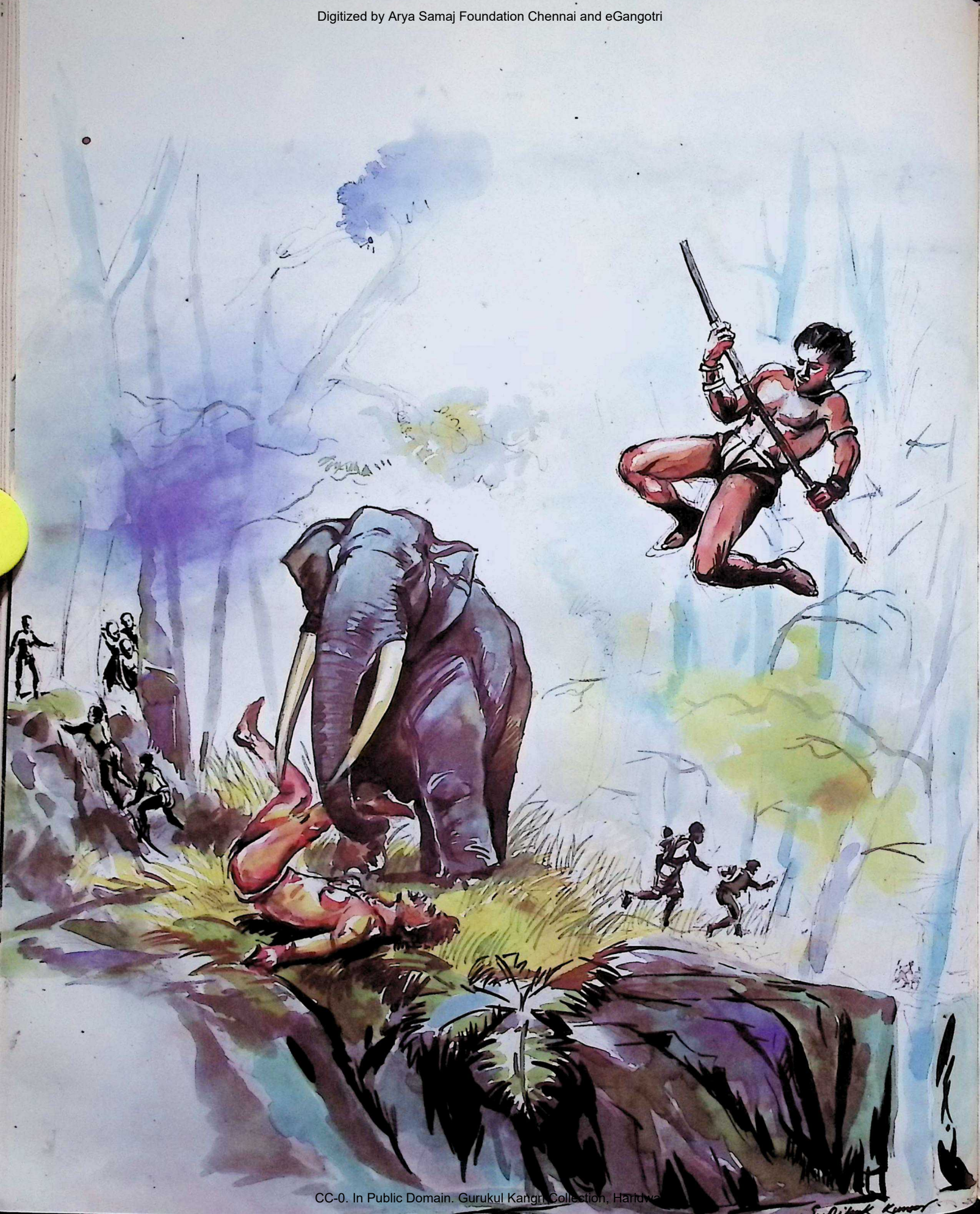

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General "You are selected. Come to His Majesty."

Chandragupta is led to King Dhana Nanda by the three generals. The king looks at Chandragupta's well-built muscular body and orders.

"King (Looking at Chandragupta) "Well done, youngman ! I am pleased to take you to my service. (Turning to Generals) Appoint him as the captain of the Guards and place him incharge of the rear gates of the Palace."

Scene 16

Location
Night Minister's Room
Interior

Characters
Old Minister, Chandragupta

Action

Chandragupta comes to the Old Minister in his uniform as a captain of the Palace Guards. The Minister is suffering from extreme pain. He draws a sketch on Chandragupta's palm showing the approach door to the tunnel from inside the Palace compound, and the Exit Gate of the tunnel inside a Fort, situated outside the Palace Compound and facing the River Bank.

Minister "This Uniform of a Captain will enable you to come to the Tunnel Door inside the Palace Compound. Do your work in the dead of night. Once you manage to enter, follow this diagram to know your route. As you reach the interior of the fort, follow the diagram to reach its secret Gate facing the water of the River. Let your armed men wait at the Bank. Make it a neat and speedy operation. We may not meet again. May God help you."

Chandragupta goes out quickly.

Scene 17

Location
Night
Inside Palace compound
Approach door to tunnel

Characters
Chandragupta,
2 Royal Guards

Action

In the dead of night, Chandragupta in royal uniforms comes near the approach gate. Two standing Guards with spears in their hand do not suspect him as he comes to them. In moments Chandragupta kills them with spear, takes out the KEY to the door, opens the door, drags the dead bodies inside, closes the door from inside, and enters into the dark Tunnel.

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Scene 18

Location
Night
Fort Facing River
Exterior

Characters
Chandragupta's
Soldiers

Action

Chandragupta opens the back gate of the Fort facing the River. Hundreds of his soldiers rush inside.

Scene 19

Location
Night
Fort Facing River
Exterior

Characters
Chandragupta, His Men, Royal Guards

Action

Chandragupta's soldiers overpower the Royal Guards, kill them one by one, and rush towards the Durgeon of treasures. With small lamps in hand, they fall upon the huge deposits of jewels and gold, and fill up their bags.

One of the wounded royal guards is seen struggling towards the entry door of the tunnel.

Chandragupta and his men are going out through the exit gate on river bank.

Scene 20

Location
Night
Fort Facing River
Exterior

Characters
Chandragupta, His Men,
Nanda Soldiers

Action

The soldiers of the Nanda King rush towards the back side of the Fort and attack the plunderers. Some of Chandragupta's men are carrying the loads of wealth and running towards their waiting horses nearby. Some others are running toward a boat in the River with their loads. Others resist the Nanda Soldiers. A struggle ensues. Most of Chandragupta's men are killed in action. Some are captured.

Chandragupta is wounded, but is seen escaping on horse. He vanishes into darkness.

A Nanda soldier puts a dagger at the throat of a captured man and threatens him death if he does not disclose the plot behind the plunder.

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Nanda Soldier "Tell me the name of your leader, or, else, you die."

The captured man keeps silent. The soldier pushes the dagger to his throat. He cries aloud in pain and says.

Captured Man "Chandragupta."

He dies.

Scene 21

Location
Highway

Characters
Chandragupta,
His Soldiers on Horse

Action

Chandragupta with a number of his soldiers are carrying the plundered wealth and are riding fast westward on the Highway. At a point, his waiting soldiers there join Chandragupta's retreating men.

Nanda Soldiers inlarge number are seen coming on horseback from the east. Battle follows.

Scene 22

Location
Night
Hut of a poor woman
Exterior

Characters
Chandragupta,
Old Woman

Action

Wounded Chandragupta, badly in need of rest for the night, comes to the door of a poor man's Hut not far from the highway. An old wowan opens the door with a lamp in her hand.

Chandragupta "Maataji, I am a trader. A tiger has wounded me on the highway. May I rest for the night on the verandha of your house !"

He lies down in fatigue. The old woman shows expression of fear.

Old Woman "I fear. Who knows, you may be a soldier of Chandragupta who invaded the capital of our King !"

Chandragupta "Oh, no, no. Do I look like a soldier ?"

Old Woman "The people of our village are scared. They saw a bloody fight between our King's soldiers and the soldiers of Chandragupta on the highway this afternoon. I heard them talking to each other in whispers how a brave man attacked Pataliputra to become the King himself. Instead, he lost the battle and his men were mercilessly killed."

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Chandragupta "Believe me, Maataji, I am not anyone's soldier. Please give me some water to drink."

The old woman enters inside, comes back with water and some food on a plate. As Chandragupta starts eating, she goes inside to feed her child.

Chandragupta hears from outside the talk inside while eating.

Scene 23

Location
Same Hut
Interior

Characters
Old woman,
Her little son

Action

The little son is sitting on floor for his night meal. An earthen lamp is burning nearby. The old women places a plate of pancake (A thick Cake of flour, sugar and milk, fried on a hot pan) before the child. The cake is very hot. The childputs his fingers at the centre of the cake and cries out.

Child "MAM, My fingers are burnt !"

The child puts his fingers inside his mouth and starts sucking. The old woman lifts the lamp and finds that the Child has taken his food from the centre.

Old Woman "You, stupid boy ! You are behaving like Chandragupta to burn your fingers by eating the cake from the centre, and not from the edges !"

Child "Mam, What has Chandragupta done ? Has he also eaten the cake like me ?"

Old Woman "No, No, Chandragupta has not eaten the middle of the cake like you to burn fingers. But, he has committed a similar blunder in a much bigger way. In his ambition to become a King, he attacked the heart of the Kingdom, that is the Capital, instead of first subduing the frontiers and outer areas. As a result, his soldiers have been killed and he has fled in defeat. So, first eat from the edges of the cake, and next eat the centre. Do you now understand your foolishness ?"

Scene 24

Location
Same Hut
Interior

Character
Chandragupta

Action

Chandragupta listens to what the old woman says to her child. His is in serious thought.

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Scene 25

Location
Taxila
Vast open ground

Characters
Chandragupta,
His Army

Action

Chandragupta is inspecting a big Army of his own, which is armed and is on parade.

Chandragupta climbs up a raised platform and harangues at his soldiers who are standing in attention.

Chandragupta

"Dear Brothers in Arms ! Dear Republicans, Tribals and Ex-Soldiers of the Fallen Kings ! I am not your king and you are not my obedient servants. We are united in brotherhood of comradeship for the noblest of the causes, namely, the liberation of our sacred soil from the hands of the hated foreigners. Our Revered Guru Dev, Acharya Chanakya, has offered us his blessings to achieve this goal.

"Comrades, we have many other things to achieve after we destroy the Greeks. Millions of oppressed subjects of the NANDA TYRANT look at us as their future liberators. We have the whole of this great land of BHARAT as the arena of our heroic deeds. Unlimited opportunities await us in days to come.

"May we, therefore, swear in the name of God and in the name of our Holy Land that we should not fear the enemies, should not hesitate to suffer, and should not fear Death. Let us be ready to defy and overcome each and every obstacle on our way. May we show it to the world that the tide of our patriotism can sweep away the foreigners and the oppressors all alike."

Soldiers raise loud cheers.

Soldiers

Jayatu Guru Chanakya
Jayatu Hero Chandragupta
Jayatu Land Bharatvarsha.

Scene 26

Action

(Flash Scenes)

A. *Chandragupta's Army falls upon the Greek Settlements. The Greeks offer determined resistance,but are defeated and killed. Their Prefects are put to death or captured. Greek Settlements are put to fire. Foreigners escape for life.*

B. *Liberated people welcome Chandragupta's soldiers with shouts of cheer. They shower flowers on Chandragupta whereever he appears on his elephant.*

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C. *Chandragupata's soldiers destroy and demolish the high towers of victory which the Greeks had raised at different places.*

D. *Liberation Scenes show the people embracing each other, dancing and playing music, singing songs of liberation.*

E. *Everywhere crowds hail Chandraguptas Liberator aned raise slogans in his favour our king our saviour our leader.*

F. *MANY defeated Greeks are seen running for life and vanishing towards the snowy mountain ranges of the Hindukush in their flight from India.*

Scene 27

Location
Pataliputra
Durbar Hall

Characters
King Dhana Nanda,
Courtiers, Generals

Action

King Dhana Nanda is holding his Durbar. A General stand up to announce to the King.

General — "Your Majesty, That Crafty Brahmin Chanakya of Taxila and his stooge Chandragupta are advancing towards our Empire with an Army made of Robbers, Plunderers, and Bad Characters. On outer areas of our Empire, among the people of several Janapadas, their Agents are inciting the people to rebellion, unrest and lawlessness. We seek Your Majesty's permission to drive them out."

Second General — "Your Majesty, we have reports that they have distributed plundered wealth among ruffians to build up a mercenary Army. Such Army we can easily destroy."

Dhana Nanda — "How does that Brahmin Beggar and how does that young Thief think of invading my Empire ? Let them advance as far as they can. Let them even come as far as Pataliputra so that they can meet their death in hands of my soldiers. At the moment, let my Army go to massacre all those rebellious elements among my subjects in the outer Janapadas of the Empire. If that is not done, Rebellion will spread. There is nothing to fear from enemy soldiers. But, Rebellion is more dangerous than Invasion. I, therefore, order to my Generals to suppress the Rebellion by ruthless and merciless manner."

A Minister — "We agree with His Majesty's order."

The court dissolves.

Scene 28

Location Night
Night
Temple

Characters
Chief Priest, A Monk

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Interior

Action

An Agent of Chanakya, in disguise as a Monk, meets the Chief Priest of the King inside a Temple on the Bank of Ganges in deep dark night. The Chief Priest is the same Brahmin who had invited Chanakya to receive honour from the Nanda King. He was sorry to see Chanakya's humiliation in the Court and had met Chanakya that very night to express his distress. Chanakya's Agent now meets that very Brahmin.

Coming as a Monk, the Agent gives the Priest his identity as Chanakya's man. The Priest is deeply nervous to see him, and to talk to him.

Monk "You must know that the fall of the Nanda Dynasty is imminent. It is a question of days. Guru Chanakya reminds you to play a role at this juncture of time. If you do it, the Blessings of all the Gods will be with you. If you do not, Heaven's Curse will fall on you. It is a moment of moments in your life. Do not miss it."

The priest is mortally afraid.

Priest "Please tell me what the Acharya has asked me to do."

The monk whispers to the ears of the chief priest for some time.

Monk "After having done this work to deceive the King, you are to immediately go into hiding, or to escape to our side. This is the request of the Acharya."

The monk leaves the place. The chief priest looks at the image of the god with tears.

Priest "Oh God ! Save this unfortunate creature ! Save me from the jaws of death.

He prostrates himself before the image.

Scene 29

Location
Dhana Nana's Room
Interior

Characters
King Dhana Nanda,
Chief Priest

Action

The Chief Priest who is also an astrologer has come to King Dhana Nanda to study the King's horoscope on the eve of the battle with the enemies. The King is looking fearful and nervous. The Chief Priest is looking serious.

Chief Priest "Your Majesty, the Horoscope indicates that the Stars are at the moment not in favourable position. For two full moon nights from now on, Your Majesty's time shows some Evil indications. But, this bad time will pass

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over in course of a few fortnights only."

The King Feels Upset.

King — "Is there no remedy against the Evil Stars? Why not offer sacrifices on the altars of all the Goddesses to appease them. As I know, Evil Times are overcome by religious rites and rituals according to the prescriptions in the Scriptures !"

The priest looks thoughtful. He closes his eyes to think of remedies.

Chief Priest — "Your Majesty ! There is one way out. All the Evil Stars and all the Bad Times can be overcome if Your Majesty can visit the temple of the seven Goddesses inside a forbidden forest away from Pataliputra. Monks from far-away holy places come to offer their prayers there. Common people fear to approach the Temple. In fact, the Temple remains closed for all people except the Monks and Holy Men. If your Majesty can visit the Temple alone and can offer prayers before the seven Goddesses, there will be no danger from any Star. Victory will be assured in coming battles. I can take Your Majesty to that forbidden Temple."

The king feels apprehensive. To go alone to a distant place.

King — "I have heard much about the power of he seven Godsses. It will be my great fortune to offer my Prayers there. But, can I not go there with an army of my bodyguards ?

Chief Priest — "Of Course, Yes, Your Majesty ! It will be a good idea if all of your top Generals also accompany you to offer their prayers after Your Majesty's prayer ! They will receive the blessings and feel emboldened to win a sure victory. Even your Majesty's Army can come there to gain divine confidence."

Scene 30

Location
Highway

Characters
Chandragupta,
Chanakya, Army

Action
(Flash Scene)

Chandragupta is advancing towards the interior of the Nanda Empire with his cavalry and infantry forces.

Behind the Army is running a small charist carrying Chanakya.

Scene 31

Location
Night
Tent
Interior

Characters
Chanakya,
Chandragupta

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Action

Chandragupta enters into Chanakya's Tent. Chanakya is sitting in the dress of a mendicant, totally unrecognisable. Chandragupta feels greatly surprised to him in that disguise, and observse him with utmost curiosity.

Chanakya — "If you fail to recognise me, nobody else can."

He smiles.

Chandragupta — "Guru Dev, Why should you at all be in disguise ? Am I not there to protect you at the cost of my life ? Are not all my soldiers ready to die for you?"

Chanakya laughs aloud.

Chanakya — "So, you think that Chanakya is a coward ! He is trying to hide his identity in fear of death ! He is in disuise to avoid detection !"

Chandragupta looks puzzled. Chanakya Continues.

Chanakya — "I have decided to enter into the vicinity of Pataliputra in this shape with some of my disciples before your Army reaches the outskirts of the Capital. Chanakya has a timely role to play at this critical moment."

Chandragupta — "No, Guru Dev, never ! I shall not allow you to go. I can imagine of the danger involved in such venture. The moment the enemy will begin to suspect, or, God forbid, the moment they capture you, where should we stand then except showing our heads on the scaffold to be cut down ?"

Chanakya — "This should not happen !"

Chandragupta — "My heart trembles to think of it. For the first time, I taste what is FEAR ! pray, kindly change your decision, and stay far behind the fronts for safety. Your life is more precious than the combined lives of all of us."

Chanakya suddenly develops his usual feat of emotional temper.

Chanakya — "Let Fear dominate your mind. But let it be also known that your Guru does not know what is Fear ! Unless Chanakya plays a role in the destruction of the Nandas, what value is my vow of vengeance ? What for have loosened the Brahmi's Hair ? Do not stand on my way. Let no body know where has Chanakya gone. Not even yourself ! This is my directive to you."

Chandragupta stands in silence. A group of monks come in.

Scene 32

Location
Temple inside forest

Characters
Dhana Nanda

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Interior

Chief Priests,
Monks, Brahmins

Action

Inside the Temple are seen the images of fierce-looking Goddesses, seven in number. The Royal chief priest with some Monks and Brahmins light small lamps, and place flowers at the feet of Images.

King Dhana Nanda is seen offering Prayers in closed eyes and with folded hands. The Monks and Brahmins chant the hymns invoking Blessings for the King.

Dhana Nanda raises his head after Bowing down for three times. He keeps himself in kneeling posture. An old monk announces the bleesings of the Goddesses. Thee temple door is now closed from inside.

Old Monk — "As long as the seven goddesses remain standing on This sacred pedestal, so long there is no danger from any evil star (Graha) to the fortuness of our Maharajadhiraj. So long as the Goddesses remain pleased with our Great Monarch, destruction will fall to all his enemies, and to all the evil-minded people who bear ill-will towards our Majesty. The Goddesses give their Blessings to the King, to his Generals and to all soldiers to defeat the enemy."

Dhana Nanda gets up and offers jewels and gold to the monks and Brahmins.

Scene 33

Location
Temple inside forest
Interior

Characters
Chief priest,
Monks, Generals

Action

King Dhana Nanda enters into his chariot and, surrounded by his bodyguards on horse, leaves the Temple premises. As the King goes out, the Monks close the door of the Temple.

5 Top Generals of the Nanda Army and a large number of Army captains bow down in front of the Temple. The Royal Chief Priest announces to them from the Temple Verandah:

Chief Priest — "The seven goddesses have heard the King's prayers. So long as the Goddesses ramain on their holy pedestal, no enemy on earth can cause any harm to the King or the King's Generals and soldiers. Holy monks will continue to offer prayers to the Goddesses till Victory is won. The goddesses so desire that the Generals and the soldiers of the King should come and see before they march out to battle Fronts."

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Generals and soldiers bow down and receive flowers from the assembled monks and their blessings.

Scene 34

Location
Temple
Exterior

Characters
Monks, pilgrims,
Simple Village Folks

Action

Some village folks, pilgrims from distant places and the Monks are sitting in front of the closed door of the Temple. They hear the wailing voice of a female from inside the Temple. Among the pilgrims are seen some AGENTS of Chanakya. One of them whispers to another as the faint wailing voice comes as a fearsome surprise to people.

First Agent — "This voice is the voice of a Goddess. She seems to bec weeping. This is most inauspicious !"

All people surround the Agent To hear him. They are nervous.

Second Agent — "No body can explain it. It is a supernatural voice. Let us go away. Who knows what may happen !"

Many villagers quickly depart.

Third Agent — "There is only one Holy mendicant who is from the Himalayas and who is resting inside the cave nearby for the night can interpret the meaning of the voice. He may possibly come here if invited by the local Brahmins and Monks."

Villagers and Brahmins start whispering discussions and decide to go to the mendicant. Wailing voice becomes louder. All people prostrate themselves. In moments, villagers bring the holy mendicant who is Chanakya himself.

Agents and monks and pilgrims bow down as the Mendicant arrives. His appearance commands awe and wonder.

Village headman — "Oh, Holy Man !What does this female voice from the Temple mean ! "

Wailing voice comes again and is more pathetic.

Chanakya — "The Temple has been desecrated by Sinners who came to the goddesses with evil minds and evil intentions. Curses of the Goddesses will fall on the people around and on all those who came. It is Temple only for monks and Brahmins. Not for all. Who came to see the forbidden Goddesses ?"

Villages — (*Trembling in fear*) "Our King came. His Priest opened the Temple. The King offered his prayers."

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Chanakya "You are doomed ! Did you not stop them ! Did you not tell them this is a prohibited Temple ?"

An Agent "Holy Man ! We are pilgrims from Mathura. We pray to you kindly to pray to the Goddesses to forgive the Sinners and the innocent people. The Goddesses will hear the prayers of a holy soul like you."

Chanakya "Ask the village priest to open the door and burn the lamps. We all will offer our prayer."

Villagers bring an old lame Brahmin to open the door. He goes with the key to the Door and Opens it.

Scene 35

Location
Temple
Exterior

Characters
Old Brahmin,
Chanakya, others

Action

The old lame Brahmin opens the door, enters inside, burns the lamps, screams aloud and falls unconscious. The images of the seven goddesses are missing from the pedestal. The temple empty.

Hearing the cry of the Brahmin, others run inside. They find the Images missing. Chanakya enters.

Chanakya "Oh, What an evil to fall ! All the accursed will soon die ! "

An Agent "Holy Man, The Chief Priest of the King announced that as long as the Goddesses remain on their Podestal, so long will fortune smile on the King."

Chanakya "And, if they are not on the Pedestal, what will happen ?"

All people whisper that the king and his people will suffer misfortune.

Chanakya "Let the sinners die. But let the Monks join me to offer prayers to the Goddesses to return to the Temple. Let the door be closed. Let us gather every mid-night to pray."

Scene 36

Location
Forest Road

Characters
5 Nanda generals on horse

Action

Five top Generals of the Nanda Emperor are riding towards the forest to visit the Temple to worship the seven goddesses. At the approach road towards the Temple they find men, women

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and children are running away with their belongings in different directions. The Generals express surprise to see the flight of the people. The common a passerby and he comes trembling.

General "Why are the villagers running away ?"

Passer-by "Something has happened at the Temple."

The Generals side fast.

Scene 37

Location
Temple
Exterior

Characters
5 Generals,
Old Brahmin

Action

Five Generals get down from horse. They find no human being anywhere. The place is deserted. Seeing them there, the old lame Brahmin comes in slow steps, weeping and afraid.

A General "Open the door. We have come to offer prayer and take the blessings."

The old Brahmin hands over the key to one of the generals and prostrates himself. The generals proceed towards the door. As the door is open, they see to their surprise that the goddesses are not on the pedestal.

A General "Tell us what has happened ?"

Brahmin (*crying*) "The Goddesses have disappeared. Evil has fallen. Death awaits us. Monks come to pray in night. You, too, may come in mid-night to pray."

The generals look at each other in surprise and fear. They start discussion.

One General "Did not the Royal Priest announce to the King and to us that as long as the Goddesses keep standing on their Pedestal, Victory will be ours. The Opposite has happened. Is it not a Divine Indication that we are domed to Defeat ?"

Second General "It is. Our soliders are in rebellious mood for non-payment of their pay. They will never fight with courage or will. How can we be sure of victory!"

Thrid General "We have reports of what the People of Pataliputra say. They say that the coming Battle will be a Battle between Forces of Evil and Forces of Righteousness. To them, we represent the forces of Evil. They curse us. Now they will know that the Goddesses have also abandoned Our King ! They may revolt and kill our children when we go to battle fronts."

Fourth General "Ja Palayati, Sa Jivati. He who flees, lives ! We have to take a decision as per the indication given to us by the vanished goddesses."

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Fifth General "Let us report about the vanished Goddesses to our Commander-in-Chief. Let him consult the Royal priest about its meaning."

Generals take to horse.

Scene 38

Location
Night House of Royal Chief Priest
Interior

Characters
Chief Priest,
Commander-in-Chief

Action

The Commander-in-Chief of the Nanda Army enters. The Chief Priest is in disguise and is about to leave his house for hiding.

Commander-in-Chief "Revered purohitji, You must have heard about the disappearance of the seven goddesses. What does it indicate ?"

Chief Priest "It indicates the Death of the King, His Generals and Army ! As you know, it is going to be Battle between Dharma And Adharma. The Goddesses have gone over to the side of the Dharma."

C.-in-C. "What do you advise we when the Gods have left us ?"

Chief Priest "Do as I do. Being the purohit of the King if I am leaving him as the Gods so desire, you will earn the pleasure of the Gods by leaving a King who is a Symbol of Sins. That is my advice."

Scene 39

Location
Place
Durbar Hall

Characters
Dhana Nanda,
Ministers,
Informer

Action

Inside the Durbar Hall, King Dhana Nanda is discussing with his Ministers and Advisers about the problems of enemy invasion. The Hall is mostly empty. About 30 people are present.

An Informer enters in an agitated mood.

Informer "Maharajadhiraj ! The Commander-in-Chief is reported to have fled away, leaving his Army on the highway. Five other Generals are reported to have led their forces to join the Enemy. The Enemy Army is rapidly advancing towards Pataliputra."

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The King and the Ministers are stunned in surprise. The King gets up from throne, trembling in anger.

Dhana Nanda — "Traitors and Consiprators ! Cowards and Villains Do these Generals think that Dhana Nanda cannot lead his Army to battle himself ? I entrusted the battle to these wretches, thinking that it is below my dignity to fight with a Brahmin Beggar and his Robber Disciple."

A Minister — "Your Majesty, Rumour circulates that the Seven Goddesses have abandoned us. Our unnerved subjects are deserting their homes."

Dhana Nanda — "Do these rustics feel that Pataliputra has fallen to the enemy hand ? Do these mindless creatures think that their King is dead ? These people need severe lessons. Announce my Orders that anyone leaving Pataliputra will be beheaded. Behead the Rumour-Mongers publicly in open streets.

Dhana Nanda looks around to find the Chief Priest among the ministers. not finding him, he bursts into violent temper.

Dhana Nanda — "Where is the Purohit who took me to that Temple of demonesses, not GODDESSES ? On return from Battle, I shall behead him publicly."

The courtiers shout "Victory be to Emperor Dhana Nanda"

Scene 40

Location
Battlefield

Characters
Dhana Nanda, His Army,
Chandragupta, His Army

Action

As the battle begins outside Pataliputra, several captains of Dhana Nanda are seen with their soldiers escaping to the enemy side, by throwing away their arms and weapons..

Dhana Nanda fights from his chariot. His soldiers fight with courage, though demoralised.

Chandragupta's soliders attack the Nanda solidiers from different sides. Grim battle scenes follow.

Chandragupta is fighting from horse-back.

Nanda soldiers attack him with all their strength.

Amond Chandragupta's Soldiers are seen a number of women soldiers who are attending upon wounded men with bandages and balms. The women are also fighting. Their leader, Durdhara, is seen on horse.

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At one point of time, an arrow strikes Chandragupta's body. Durdhara rides in lightening speed and takes out the arrow Chandragupta's body. Chandragupta fights again.

An Arrow finally strikes Dhana Nanda in the Neck. He falls down dead. His soldiers lie down in submission. The battle is over.

Victorious Chandragupta proceeds towards Pataliputra, followed by his soldiers.

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Episode Four

Commentary

With his victory over King Dhana Nanda, Chandragupta ascended the Throne of Magadha and laid the foundation of the Mauryan Dynasty and of the Mauryan Empire. With Chanakya as his Prime Minister, he conquered extensive territories and became the Chakravarti *Sovereign of most of India. When his glorious rule was coming to its culminating point, the Greek King Seleucus Nikator invaded the North-West in order to recover Alexander's lost Indian possessions. Chandragupta inflicted a crushing defeat on the Enemy, forced Seleucus to surrender a large portion of the Greek-ruled territory as well as to offer his own daughter in marriage to him.*

Scene 1

Location
River Ganga

Characters
Chanakya

Action

Chanakya enters into the water of River Ganga, flowing by Pataliputra, in dawn time to offer thanks to Mother Ganga for the fulfilment of his vow to destroy the Nandas.

Chanakya — "Oh Mother Ganga, Oh the Eternal Divine Mother, Oh the Sacred River ! You gave your blessings to this momentary mortal to fulfil his vow. With your Grace, I have at last accomplished the work !

Let your Sacred water now purify this city of the depraved Nandas, wash out the sins of Tyranny and Oppression. Let your water sanctify its soil for the virtuous deeds of the New Dynasty ! Oh Divine Mother, Let your children — the children of Bharat — get Blessings to feel inspired by the Soul-Force of their Sacred Motherland to shake off the shames of subjugation and oppressions for a new era of their existence. Oh Mother, Give your Blessings to the Dynasty of the Mauryas to serve this hoary

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Land of Bharat and bring glory to their country. Let the fame of this Land spread across the farthest corners of the earth.''

Sun is Rising on The Horizon

Chanakya ''Oh Mother Ganga ! on your Holy Water, I offer my Prayers to all the Gods and Goddesses in Heaven for their Blessings to the children of Bharat.''

Chanakya Dips in Water and Rises up. He now Holds his Bunch of Loose Hair and Puts a knot to it.

Chanakya ''So, at last, Chanakya ties up his loose hair having fulfilled his vow of the destruction of the Nandas ! Be it the happiest moment of his life !''

Chanakya looks to the Rising Sun, Folds his Hands and Offers his Namaskar to the Sun God.

Chanakya ''Yaba Kusumam Sankasam, Kashyapeya Mahadyuti, Dhantari Sarva Papaghna, Pranatasmi Divakara.''

From the Water Chanakya Comes out and Walks Upwards to the Ghat.

Scene 2

Location
River Ghat

Characters
Priests, Girls, Chanakya

Action

As Chanakya comes up from the water to the ghat, 20 girls in white silk sarees perform ARRTI with burning lamps and singing a hymn prayer. They blow conches.

Priests shower flowers on chanakya's body and put sandal paste on his forehead. They Chant Vedic hymns.

Chanakya Raises his palm to bless them all. He proceeds towards a nearby temple, followed by others. Sounds of trumpets are being heard from the distance.

Scene 3

Location
Coronation Pandal

Characters
Chandragupta, Chanakya, Courtiers, Generals, Priests, Dhurdhara (Queen), People

Action

Under a huge glittering Canopy are seen numerous people including nobles, generals, ministers and notables. Inside is a raised platform with insignia of peacocks to serve the purpose of the Coronation Pandal.

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Chandragupta and his wife, Queen Dhurdhara are led to the Thrones on the platform by the Priests. Amid the chanting of hymns and blowing of hundreds of conches, a Crown is placed on the head of Chandragupta by the Chief priest who is the same person who had helped Chanakya.

After Chandragupta and Dhurdhara take the thrones, Chanakya is taken to the platform amidst loud cheers from all. He takes his seat on a simple wooden chair as the Prime Minister. As the chanting by hymns comes to an end, Chanakya stands up to announce his dictum to the New Monarch.

Chanakya — "Praja Sukhe Sukham Rajnah Prajanam Ca Hite Hitam, "Natmapriyam Hitam Rajnah Prajanam Tu Priyam Hitam."

(The happiness of the subjects is the happiness of the King ; Their well-being, His. The King's welfare lies not in his own pleasure, but in that of his subjects.)

Chanakya next Turns to Chandragupta and Addresses him.

Chanakya — "Rajan, Let the Dream of our ancient Seers come true. Let the whole landmass from the lofty Himalayas to the deep Seas form one and United country. Let Bharatavarsha turn into a Chakravarti Kishetram for all the children of Bharat — Bharata-Santatih. Let not the expulsion of the Greeks and the destruction of the Nandas put a stop to your heroic deeds. Let be these achievements only the beginning ! Let your brave soldiers overrun the whole country."

Chanakya Takes out a Sharp Knife, Tears his Thumb and Takes out Blood, and puts the Blood as TILAK *on the Forehead of Chandragupta. Sound of the Drums and Trumpets Fill the Air. People Cheer.*

Scene 4

Location
City Centre

Characters
People

Action

Wild Scenes of Popular Jubilance Mark the Day of Coronation. Chandragupta, Sitting on an Elephant, is Seen in the Streets. As Thousands of Men and Women Cheer, Dance and Sing. Drums and Trumpets Play Music. People Raise Continuous Voice:

"Maurya Putra Chandragupta, Jayatu, Jayatu."

Scene 5

Flash Action

Chandragupta is in Front of his Army at the Palace Gate, Sitting in a Chariot, on the

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Mission of his Conquests.

The Cycle of Time Circles in Several Rounds.

As the Chariot Returns, Chandragupta is Shown as Middle-aged (39 Years old).

Scene 6

Location
Durbar Hall

Characters
Chanakya (Aged 68) Chandragupta (aged 39), Generals, Courtiers, Informer

Action

Chandragupta has conquered most parts of India. He is holding his Court to discuss about further conquests. Chandragupta is addressing the Court. At the end, an informer is brought in.

Chandragupta — "Courtiers and Generals ! You are all aware of the fact that with the good-will of Mahabhaga Chanakya, I have overrun and subdued almost the whole the India with my army of six hundred thousands. The away of my administration runs from West to East, from North to South. The only Kingdom which still remains unconquered is Kalinga. It is now time for me and my army to invade that neighbouring country on our southern frontier. We have to complete the unification of the whole Bharatavarsha from the Himalayas to the Sea. (*Turning to Chanakya*)

Mahabhaga, the Kalingans, as I know, are powerful people. They have established Colonies across the Ocean. But I am determined to extinguish their power. Unless we subdue that country, Your great objective of *Chakravarti-Kshetram* will remain incomplete."

Chanakya — "Rajan ! I know, without the Conquest of Kalinga our mission will remain unfinished, But , we have to be a little cautious about that country. My information is, the Elephants of Kalinga are the best in whole India. And, the King of that country possesses an invincible Elephant Force. unless we raise a formidable Elephant force to counteract their force, We may run a grave risk. For the time, let us allow the Kalingans to remain independent, till we are sure of victory,"

A General — "We assure Your Majesty, we may be able to raise an elephant force of great strength within a reasonable period of time. Even without it, we have the all-India resources behind our military strength to undertake any further invasion."

A Guard Enters to Inform that an Informer from the North-West Frontiers Seeks Interview.

Chandragupta — "Bring him in."

The Informer Enters? Bows Down, and Awaits Permission to Speak.

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Chandragupta — "Is there any urgent or important information which you have carried to the Court ? If you have, speak out."

Informer — "Your Majesty ! The Greek King of Syria and Babylon, Seleucus Nikator, is fast advancing towards the western frontiers of the Maurya Empire with a large army. He has announced his determination to reconquer the lost territories of Alexander on the soil of India. Our spies have located his advancing forces not far from River Indus ! They are coming in lightening speed."

Chandragupta Expresses Anger. Courtiers and Generals Express Surprise.

Chanakya — "I have my information about this Greek. He was the most notorious and most ambitious among all the Generals of Alexander. When Alexander met his untimely death in Babylon on his way back from India towards Greece, and when his Generals quickly partitioned the vast Empire of Alexander, this Nikator claimed Syria and Babylon as his share. He got these lands to rule independently. Over these years, he has been able to extend his territories as far as the Mediterranean Sea. He calls himself a king. His ambitions seem to have croseed all limits !"

Chandragupta — "Did not this Greek see me as a lad in Alexander's Tent? Does he not know as yet who Chandragupta Maurya is ?"

Chanakya — "He is not that fool not to know of you. What he does not realise is that Chandragupta Maurya is the most powerful Emperor of the Eastern Hemisphere ruling over the earth's largest Empire !"

Chanakya Smiles Cunningly. Courtiers Laugh Aloud.

First general — "Your Majesty ! Any one of your Generals can easily throw Seleucus and his Greeks out. I pray for your order to this humble servant to advance forthwith."

Second General — "Your Majesty ! This time the Greeks need a more sevre blow from our hands. We want to teach Seleucus a Lesson which his race may remember for ever."

Chandragupta — "Lesson ! Of Cource Yes ! But let Chandragupta himself teach that great Lesson to the Race of Alexander !"

Generals — "No, Your Majesty, No. We are here for that work. What any one of us can achieve, why should Your Majesty take the trouble of doing it ! We can annihilate the enemy after defeating them."

Chandragupta — "I know, you can do it. But the Greeks need no mere defeat ! They need something much more than that. If Nikator thinks of conquering my territories ,Chandragupta can prove that he is capable of conquering the territories of the Greeks. Let it be a war of retaliation. Let Alexander's body turn and tremble in his Grave. Let his ghost see this Maurya in

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Armour, whose bare body he saw while alive and about whose exploits he heard before his death.''

Chandragupta Turns Towards Chanakya, Raises his Voice in Anger and Emotion.

Chandragupta ''Mahabhaga ! Chandragupta is not yet forty in age. I shall lead my Army myself to the heart of the Greak Land.''

Chanakya (*smiling*) ''May Victory be yours. May the soldiers of Bharat achieve triumph over the forces of the West under your command. May you achieve the Crowning Glory of your military and conquering career!''

Chandragupta Get Up. The Court Acclaims his Decision with Cheers.

Courtiers ''Victory to our Chakravarti Emperor ! Victory to Chandragupta's Maurya ! Victory to the Maurya Army.''

Scene 7

Location
Highway

Characters
Chandragupta, Generals, Army

Action

Chandragupta in a chariot is Leading his Cavalry and Infantry forces towards the West. The Whole Army is Moving in High Speed Through the Long Highway.

Scene 8

Location
Night, Interior of Tent

Characters
Chandragupta, 5 Generals, Informer

Action

Inside the Army Tent in the night,Chandragupta is discussing battle strategies with his top 5 Generals.

First Generals ''Your Majesty, we have crossed the River Indus in time, before the Greeks crossed it. Seleucus has come with a big army and his soldiers are in good spirit.''

Second General ''King Seleucus is so confident of his Victory that he has even ventured to bring with him his whole Harem including his Queen and his Daughter. Our spies say that the Greek King's Family is kept well behind the Army Formation in a Tent inside the forests.''

Chandragupta ''Yes, Nikator's over confidence may be a factor in bringing his Harem. But, more than that confidence is the fact of their knowledge of the

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civilised conduct of the Indians. The Greeks know that our soldiers do not cause any harm to women. Even in victory, they do knw how to honour the women of the vanquished.''

Third General — ''The enemy army is ready to advance. They are preparing for a surprise attack on us.''

Chandragupta — ''That is the strategy which Alexander adopted while attacking King Puru. They do not observe a code of scruples or conduct in battles, as we the people of this land do. They believe in treachery. We believe in brave fighting. If Seleucus thinks of taking us by surprise, let us not give him that chance. Let us, therefore, advance upon them swiftly for a straight battle.''

Chandragupta Thinks. An Informer Comes in and Bows Down.

Informer — ''Your Majesty ! The Greeks are preparing to deceive us by thir usual game of delaying tactics and to attack us at an unsuspecting moment.''

Chandragupta — ''That is excellent. Let them play their delaying game to deceive themselves. Let our Army attack the Greeks right next morning.''

Scene 9

Location
Night, Tent of Seleucus, Interior

Characters
Seleucus, Generals, Megasthenes

Action

Seleucus is discussing strategy of battle with his Generals and his adviser, Megasthenes.

General — ''Your Majesty! Chandragupta has himself led his Army. It means he was not sure of his Generals !''

Megasthenes — ''I wonder, how could the Indian King come so swiftly from far-away Pataliputra to reach the Indus to resist us before we crossed the River !''

Seleucus — ''It means, his Army must be tired, fatigued and exhausted in coming across long long distances. They must be in need of rest for some days. Better, therefore, let us change our tactics. Let us attack them tomorrow morning before they are ready to face battle.''

General — ''Your Majesty ! We are ready. The enemy will meet its doom if we invade at the earliest.''

Scene 10

Location
Greek Harem
Night, Interior

Characters
Seleucus, Queen, Princess Athene

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Action

The Greek Queen and the Princess are seen arranging Dinner for the King. Seleucus enters.

Seleucus — "We have decided to begin the battle tomorrow morning. The Indians are tired and unprepard. It will be a sudden attack and we are sure of victory."

Queen — "That is a good thing to do. We hear that their King has himself come to fight with you. We also hear that he has no elephants with him, which our soldiers fear."

Seleucus — "Yes,Chandragupta himself has come. It is good that he has not brought the elephant phalanx which even could terrify Alexander when we came to fight against Puru."

Athene — "Father, We have asked our guards to make arrangements for us at a distance from where we can observe the battle scenes."

Seleucus (*surprised*) — "oO No, No. There may be risks from the Indian Archers. Their arrows go very far. Do not run that risk."

Athene — "Dear father, You took me to see your battle near the Mediterranean Sea. I enjoyed the scenes. Please do not deny me the pleasure this time. We shall be at a very safe distance. Even if the Archers can come to any near distance, they will never aim their arrows at women. I have read, the Indians are believers in certian principles. They fight the enemy only in the battlefield. They do not attack unarmed people outside the field."

Seleucus — 'Do take sufficient precaution. Take with you as many Greek ladies as possible as your escorts.

Scene 11

Location
Battlefield

Characters
Chandragupta, His Army., Seleucus, His Army

Action

Chandragupta, In Shining Armour, Sitting on a Big Horse as a Brave Warrior Leads his Cavalry and Infantry Forces to the Battlefield.

Greek Generals Advance Swiftly with thier Phalanx of Infantry, Followed by Cavalry. Seleucus is Seen Far behind the Battle Lines on Horse Back, Protected by Soldiers. Battle Scenes follow. Indian Army Plays Devastating Havoc to Greek forces. They Break the Greek Phalanx with Cavalry Charges.

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Scene 12

Location
At a Distance
Raised Platform

Characters
Athene (Aged 25)
Queen, Women Guards

Action

Far behind the battlefield at a safe distance from arrows, the Greek Princess and the Queen with their Maids are observing the battle scenes from a raised wooden platform, as high as a tree. The Platform is covered with leaves and creepers.

First Maid — (*Pointing finger towards the Battlefield*) "That warrior on horse is the Indian King himself."

Athene Observes with Curiosity .

Athene — "i thought, he is an old man! But he is not that. He looks quite young."

Second Maid — "Of Course he is young. He fought with the Greeks in Alexander's Tent when he was not even 20 years old. Not even another 20 years have passed since then. He is not even middle-aged !"

Third Maid — "Look, how is he charging our Generals ! Oh! He kills our Men !"

Queen — "We have heard enough of that man. He is a dare devil. While a young man, he fought with a mad elephant. He can even face lions ! But today he is facing a real Lion of Man, our King. With all his childish and reckless conduct, he is going to suffer badly. King Puru showed this kind of thoughtless recklessness and fell mortally wounded before Alexander ! Chandragupta will meet the same fate in hands of Seleucus. He does not know that by running risks to his own life in the battlefield, he may lose not only his life but also his Empire ! Poor Wretch !"

Princess Athene Looks Sad to Hear Her Mothers's Comments

A Maid — "Oh Dear ! Indians are advancing from all directions."

Second Maid — "our soldiers are losing. They are beginning to run away."

Queen (*nervous*) — "Where is the King?"

A Maid Points Towards the Position of Seleucus Behind the Battlefield. He is Guarded and is Safe.

Athene (*nervous*) — "Mother, Look ! Chandragupta is advancing towards my Father's position. Greek resistance seems to be collapsing !"

Greek Soldiers Come Rushing Towards The Ladies.

Greek Captain — "Our King orders the Ladies to return to the Harem forthwith. The Battle is rapidly turning against us. There is fear of a massacre. Please escape quickly."

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An Indian Cavalry Force Reaches the Place. The Greek Force under the Platform is Overpowered . Indian Archers Point their Arrows upwards.

Comes on Horse Swiftly Prince Bindusara and Orders the Indian force to Withdraw.

Bindusara "Soldiers ! Do not point your arms upward. They are not enemy soldiers, but respected ladies. Take them to their Harem with honour and leave them there safely. If necessary, give them full protection as long as they need."

Scene 13

Location
Battlefield

Characters
Chandragupta, Seleucus, Soldiers

Action

Chandragupta with a cavalry force advances towards the position of Seleucus. From his horse back, Chandragupta shouts at the Greek King.

Chandragupta "Seleucus Nikator ! Order your Generals to surrender before it is late for them to survive. Do you want your Army to be annihilated ?"

Seleucus "Damn your challenge, You proud man ! Better retreat yourself. My brave soldiers have ever tasted victory in every battlefield. They will taste victory here too, over your fallen body."

Chandragupta Charges Towards the Position of the Greek King. Greeks are Encircled. Fierce Battle Scenes follow.

Battle Scenes Continue.

Indian General (*To his Army*) "Begin the work of extermination if the Greeks do not throw their arms and surrender."

Seleucus is Seen Fleeing from the Battlefield for Life. As the Greeks are Slaughtered by Indian Swordsmen and Archers, and Greek Generals Fall Dead, A Greek General Raises his Arms Upwards as a Sign of Surrender.

Greek General "Soldiers, lay down your arms."

The Greek Soldiers Lay Down their Arms and Raise their Hands Upward. The Mauryan Army Surround the Greeks with Naked Sword in Hands. Some of Their Generals are taken Prisoners.

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Scene 14

Location
At a Distance

Characters
Seleucus, Chandragupta, Soldiers

Action

At a distance from the Battlefield, King Seleucus while escaping on horse with his guards are surrounded by the Indian Cavalry Forces. Seleucus halts, gets down from his horse. Chandragupta arrives there on horse back.

Chandragupta — "Nikator ! In memory of Alexander's treatment towards the Brave Puru, I do not want to insult you by taking you as a Prisoner. Puru was brave and therefore Alexender treated him as a King—an independent King. You are not like Puru. I shall treat you therefore as a defeated King, but shall not humiliate you as a Prisoner of war. I command you to send your men to my Generals to beg for Peace on our terms, Or, else, my Army will march upon your Capital."

Scene 15

Location
Army Tent, Interior

Characters
5 Maurya Generals, 5 Greek Generals, Megasthenes

Action

Inside a specially prepared Tent, the Victorious Maurya Generals and the Defeated Generals are discussing the Terms of Peace. Megasthenes is representing King Seleucus.

Megasthenes — "As commanded by Your Gracious Majesty, Emperor Chandragupta Maurya, We have come on behalf of our Majesty, King Seleucus, to offer our Prayer for Peace. I am further to say that our Majesty wants to be treated by Your Majesty as a King."

Maurya C.-in-C. — "Not as a king, but as a defeated King, that is what Our Majesty desiers."

Greek C-in-C. — "Our Majesty desires to say that our Great Hero Alexander treated King Puru not as a Defeated King, but as an Independent and honourable Friend."

Maurya C-in-C. — "There is a great difference. King Puru fought as a hero to defend his Kingdom against invaders. Alexander recognised his patriotism and courage. On the other hand, Your King invaded our Empire. Your King has been defeated totally and therefore he deserves the lesson of punishment. Our Majesty is prepared to march upon your Capital and annex your Kingdom to the Mauryan Empire."

Megasthenes — "Our Majesty prays to Your Auguest not to advance upon Babylon, but to accept our Peace Offer by accepting a portion of the Greek Territory."

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Maurya C-in-C. "We would plead with Our Majesty to agree to territorial compensation, provided the territory to be surrendered is extensive and substantail."

Megasthenes and the Greek Generals Discuss in Whispers for a While.

Megasthenes "Our Majesty the Greek king Seleucus would like to surrender to the Maurya Emperor the Four Provinces of the Greek Kingdom, namely, Paraopanisadai (Kabul), Arachosia (Kandahar), Ariana (Heart and Gandhara), and, Gedrosia (Baluchistan). On his behalf we pray that the Mauryan Side agree to this surrender."

The Mauryan Generals Discuss in Whispers.

Mauryan C-in-C. "We have no trust on your King or on your race. Our Majesty will be pleased to demand a guarantee that in future the Greek King should not be able to play any mischief on our distant frontier."

Greek C-in-C "What kind of guarantee might please your Monarch ?"

Mauryan C-in-C "Our Imperial Majesty will feel happy if Your King agrees for a Matrimonial alliance between the Mauryan Family and the Selucid Family. We propose, Princess Athene, the Daughter of King Seleucus be given in marriage to Emperor Chandragupta. This would surely ensure a lasting friendship between the two dynasties and a lasting peace between the two countries."

Greek C-in-C. "An Impossible Demand ! An Insulting Demand !"

Greek Generals Stand up. But Megasthenes Remains Seated.

Mauryan C-in-C. "You call it Insulting ! Think in cool head and you will find it most honourable ! A victorious Emperor is doing favour to a defeated King by asking for the King's daughter to become the Queen of an Emperor. Well, our demand is final. Either you agree, or you see the destruction of your capital and annexation of your Kingdom. Our Emperor has treated your King well. Instead of taking him as a prisoner, Our Majesty has kept him so far as a Guest inside the captured Harem of your King.

Megasthenes "We have to carry the Proposal of Matrimonial Alliance to Our King. After all, the issue is not political but social and personnel. Your demand is not the kingdom of King Seleucus, but the Daughter of a Father ! Moreover, you demand a Greek Bride for an Indian Bridegroom. It is an issue of inter-racial marriage ! We have to take the issue to our King. We have to beg you this permission."

Mauryan Commander-in-Cheif Gets up and Says:

Mauryan C-in-C. "Go, and tell your King to remind him what his Master Alexander after defeating the Emperor Darius of Persia not only annexed the Persian Empire to the Greek Kingdom but also married a Persian Princess of the Family of the defeated Monarch. Our Emperor can do the same to you.

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He can annex your Kingdom as well as marry the King's daughter. But, generous as Our Majesty is, he will be satisfied to take your Four Provinces only, and, of course, to marry the Princess. By this, Emperor Chandragupta is doing an honour to the Greek Race. our Social attitude is magnanimous. Though the Indians regard the Greeks as *Yavanas,* yet your country will receive the Greek Princess as the Bride of our Emperor with a sense of pleasure. Do not miss this golden opportunity for the sake of your kingdom and for the honour of the Greek People."

Scene 16

Location
Night, Greek Harem
Interior

Characters
Seleucus, Megasthenes,
Greek Queen, Princess
Athene

Action

Inside the Inner Apartment of the Greek Harem, Lamps are burning in all sides. All characters are in agitated and excited mood. Queen is in tears. Athene is in composed mood. Seleucus looks desperate.

Seleucus — "Megasthenes ! Your have known your King for long. As long as my dagger is in my possession, I shall not accept the humiliating term to hand over my daughter to the Indian King. I am ready to cut my own throat, but not to give away my dear daughter."

The Queen Bursts into Tears and Sobs.

Megasthenes — "Your Majesty ! Chandragupta has taken a very rigid stand on this issue. As I understand, He is not the man to change his mind, Of course, his demand is not the result of either his malice towards Your Majesty or hatred towards the Greek Race, but his sentimential liking for our Princess about whose grace and nobility he has heard enough from his spies."

Seleucus (*excited*) — "Damn his sentiment ! Damn his liking for my daughters ! I am prepared for the worst. Inform Chandragupta that Seleucus does not accept his proposal."

Seleucus is About to Turn Back and Leave the Place with his Hand on his Dagger.

Athene — "Father, will it not please you if I say that I have liked Chandragupta ! Will it not please you that your daughter becomes an Empress ! Will it not please you that I leave the deserts of Syria in order to live on the bank of beautiful Ganges. Will it not please you that the two Royal Houses live in Peace instead of facing each other as enemies !"

Seleucus — (*Expressing deep surprise*) "Do you say so, my dear daughter ! Will not my Act appear as the act of a coward! Will it not appear as an act to bring dishonour to the Greeks "

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Athene — "Father, Did not Alexander desire this kind of "Marriage between the Nations"? Did he not arrange a grand scale marriage between the Greeks and the Persians ? Will it not enhance the honour of the Greeks that a Princess of their Race becomes the Wife of an Emperor of India ?"

Seleucus — "May have Alexander done so as a Conqueror of races. To day I stand as a defeated King. My honour has been shattered. Better I should die, rather than dishonour myself further. I should not be there to see the fall of my Capital or the annexation of my Kingdom. I have taken my resolve."

Athene Starts Sobbing.

Megasthenes — "Your Majesty, may I pray to offer my humble submission as your well-wisher ! The moment is critical. We understand your Majesty's distress. But Your Majesty also have to think of his kingdom and his subjects. For sake of the welfare of the people, the sacrifice of a daughter will be Your Majesty's most noble act as a king."

Seleucus Looks at Megasthenes with Disbelieving Eyes.

Megasthenes — "Your Majesty, the Mauryans are a noble people. Chandragupta is most honourable as a person. I have heard all about him as a man and a king. His first wife Dhurdhara died long ago while giving birth to her only son, Bindusara. Since then Chandragupta has not married again. He will do everything to honour our Princess. I am sure, Athene will be happhy as the Empress of a great Empire. Their Capital Pataliputra is more beautiful than the cities of Susa and Ekbatana. Your Majesty, Time is running out. Since Princess Athene has liked Chandragupta, I pray to your Majesty kindly to accord your consent to the proposal of marriage. I am prepared to accompany dear Athene to Pataliputra and to stay in that Capital as long as necessary."

Seleucus Remains Silent. The Queen and the Princess Come Nearer to the King. Seleucus Embraces his Daughter with Tears in his Eyes.

Megasthenes Bows Down and Leaves Signifying his Departure to the Mauryan Camp to Inform about the accptance of the Proposal.

Scene 17

Location
Huge Pavilion

Interior

Characters
Chandragupta , Generals, Seleucus, Megasthenes, Greek Generals, Maids, Princess Athene (Age 25) Pince Bindusara (Age 20)

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Action

This is the marriage-scene between Chandragupta and Athene. Inside a pompously decorated Pavilion on the Bank of River Indus, the Greeks and Indians gather to celebrate the marriage ceremony. Seleucus is present with his Queen. Chandragupta is present with his son, Crown-Prince Bindusara. The Emperor is in the dress of a Bridegroom and Athene is in dress of an Indian Bride. Athene is led by her father Seleucus towards Chandragupta. She places a Garland around the neck of Chandragupta. Chandragupta also places a Garland around her neck. Prince Bindusara brings to Athene ornaments of diamonds and jewels.

Seleucus — "Let this marriage perpetuate the friendship between the Greeks and the Indians and herald an era of peace between the Eastern and Western hemispheres. While I offer my Daughter to the Indian Emperor as a proof of my recognition of his valour, power and honour, I also propose to send an Ambassador in the person of Magasthenes to the Court of the Mauryas to strengthen the friendship between my country and that of the Mauryas."

Chandragupta — "I accept Princess Athene, the Daughter of King Seleucus as my beloved wife. She is the Empress of the Magadhan Empire from this moment of her marriage and will continue to enjoy that position as long as I rule.

Turning to Athene

"I lost my dear Queen Dhurdhara at the age of 21 only. No one has occupied her place since then. I am happy to have you as my Consort for the rest of my life."

As Chandragupta Places the Garland around her neck, the Greeks and Indians Raise Cheers: "Hail Empress Athene." Chandragupta Turns To Seleucus.

Chandragupta — 'As a token of pleasure for my relationship with the Selucid Dynasty, I present to you as my father-in-law, Five Hundred Elephants to strengthen your Force against other Kings of the Greek World. My Army will be with you whenever you are in danger from your enemies. My son, Bindusara. will maintain his cordial friendship with your Dynasty when the succeeds to the Throne."

Cheers From All.Chandragupta Calls for Prince Bindusara (Aged 20) To the Presence of Seleucus and Athene. They Embrace Each Other. Cheers Follow.

The Two Kings and the Guests Take Their Seats. The Greek Girls Present a Dance Performance.

Scene 18

Location
Pataliputra
Palace Gate

Characters
Chandragupta, Athene, Soldiers and People, Palace Maids

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Action

Chandragupta with Princess Athene, Megasthenes, Bindusara and others Enter the Gate of Pataliputra in Decorated Chariots. Palace Maids Perform Arati to Receive Athene. Multitudes of Men, Women and Children Welcome the Victorious Monarch with Cheers and Showering of Flowers, to the Beating of Drums and Playing of Trumpets.

Scene 19

Location
Palace Garden
Sunset

Characters
Prince Bindusara, His Wife Dharma, Palace Maidens, Greek Girls

Action

It is evening. Prince Bindusara is enjoying the joyful games of the Indian and Greek young maidens who are sprinkling water and throwing rose-petals at each other. Towards the end of their game, Dharma, the wife of the Prince, enters the garden. Bindusara expresses displeasure and asks the maidens to disperse. Dharma comes to him. Dharma is in advanced stage of pregnancy. She looks sad and tearful.

Dharma — "Should my presence at any time and anywhere annoy you ? You married me as your *AGRAMAHISI*, but you behave in a way as if I am not even worthy of being your maid-servant !"

Bindusara (*Agitated*) — "I was lured 64 your beauty and charm, and you deceived me saying that you are the daughter of a Brahman of Champa, while, in fact, you come of very low origin ! Should I, after knowing what you are, treat you as my chief wife ? Can I ever think of you as the future Empress of the Mauryans ? How do you hope to be treated as such ?"

Dharma — "It is my misfortune that you believe such fictitious stories circulated by your other wives in envy of me. They have spoiled our relation. They have destroyed your love towards me. How long should I suffer your cruel negligence ? Should I be treated as an outcast even when I am carrying your child in my womb ?"

Bindusara (*Angry*) — "Damn Your Child ! I even would not like to look at his its face. It will be unworthy of my Dynasty."

Bindusara Abruptly leaves the place and Proceeds Towards his Another Wife who is Seen at a Distant Corner of the Garden. Dharma Sits Near a Fountain and Weeps.

Scene 20

Location
Dharma's Apartment
Interior

Characters
Dharma, Astrologer, Pingalavatsa

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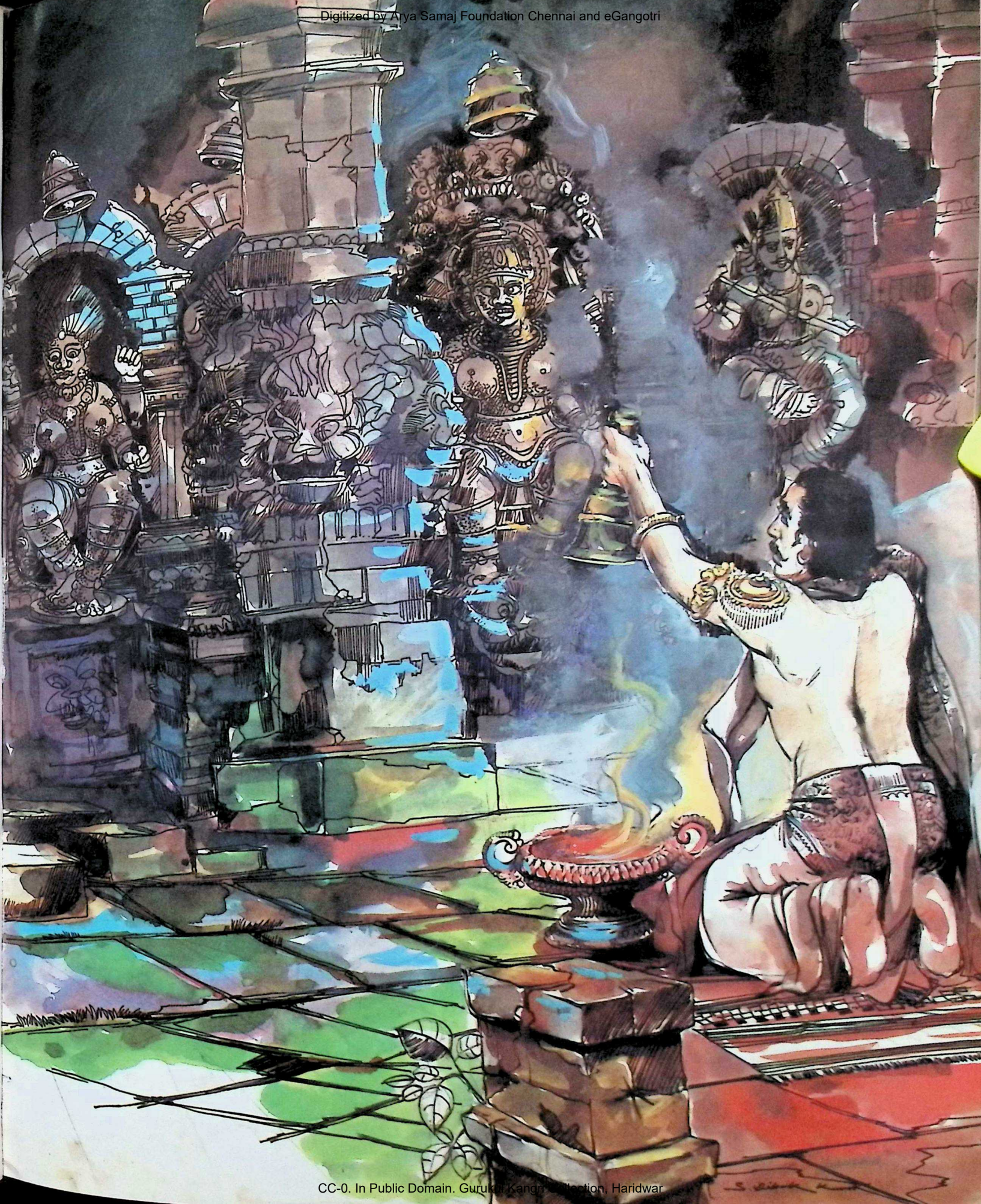

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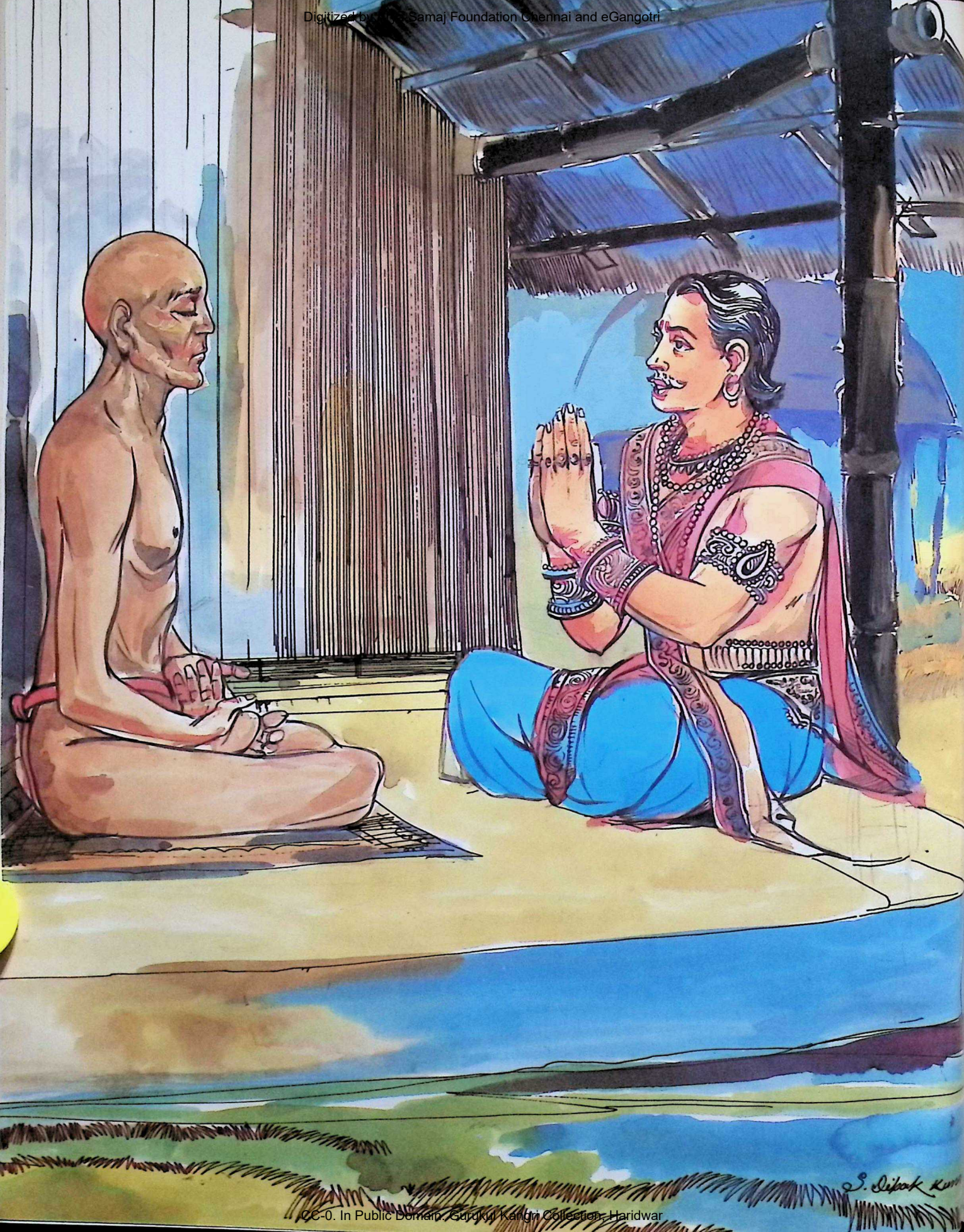

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Action

Dharma, carrying child in womb, is consulting the famous Astrologer, Pingalavasta.

Dharma — "Your Holiness ! You know of my bleeding heart. you know of my sorrows. With what hope am I carrying this child ! kindly tell me, What has the FATE stored for my child ! Fortune or Misfortune?"

Dharma Wipes her Tears.

Astrologer — "Agramahisi ! I have studied your horoscope. I see your forehead and read the writings on it.'

Dharma — "May I confess before you my mysterious desires in these days of my advanced pregnancy ! They are abnormal desires. I feel mortally fearful if my wishes are evil omens !"

Astrologer — "Please open your mind without reservation. I can find the meaning of your desires."

Dharma — 'Desires overtake me that I shall eat the 'SUN', the "Moon', and the 'Stars', and also the 'Earthworms'.

Dharma Remains Silent, Eagerly Looking at the Face of the Astrologer. The Astrologer Looks Thoughful & Fearful.

Astrologer — "I can tell you its meaning only if you take on Oath before me not to disclose it to anybody. And, certainly not to your Husband."

He Looks Around to See if Anyone is Near. He Finds None.

Dharma — "I swear in the name of Gods, I shall not open my mind to any person on earth."

Astrologer — "You want to eat 'Earthworms' which means, your son, who will be a mighty man and a mighty monarch, will destroy all his internal enemies who will try to bite him like worms in his early life. your desire to eat the Sun, the Moon and the Stars means, your son will acquire the Power as that of the Sun, will acquire the love of people as does the Moon, and will acquire the light to shine for all time as do the Stars in sky. You are blessed, my dear, that you will be the Mother of such a luminous Son. I bless you and your child."

A Happy Dharma Wipes Out from her Face the Tears of Joy. She Places Jewels at the Feet of the Astrologer and Takes Dust from his Feet. The Astrologer Looks Fearful and Nervous while Looking in Every Direction.

Scene 21

Location
Exterior

Characters
A Women Guard, Astrologer

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Action

As the Astrologer comes out of Dharma's Apartment, he finds a woman guard waiting for him outside.

Guard "The Crown-Prince wants you to come to him at once."

Visibly Nervous, The Astrologer mutters Words of Prayer to Several Gods, and Proceeds fearfully Towards Bindusara's Apartment.

Scene 22

Location
Bindusara's Apartment
Interior

Characters
Prince Bindusara,
Astrologer Pingalavatsa, Boy Susima (Age 2)

Action

The Astrologer is now seen in the Room of Bindusara. Bindusara is holding his eldest child SUSIMA (Aged Two) on his lap.

Bindusara "What did you find about Dharma' Sunborn child ?"

Astrologer "Aryaputra ! It will be a son, but a son to cause much suffering to others as well as to himself. The Agramabisi's son will be a much-hated man ! Of course, I did not say anything about this to Dharma."

Bindusara "It is good, you did not tell her. Let her son be anything. It does not matter. I am happy that you have foretold a great future for this child, my first son. I have named him Susima. Will you study his forehead to trace auspicious marks !"

Bindusara Lifts the Boy and Holds it Before the Astrologer's Eyes. The Astrologer Keenly Observes the boy's Forehead, Smiles, and Says.

Astrologer "What a future ! What a fortune ! He will be the worthy descendent of a worthy grand-father and a worthy father. He will be ever glorious, ever successful and ever victorious !"

Bindusara Kisses the Boy Profusely.

Scene 23

Location
Night, Dharma's Apartment
Interior

Characters
Dharma, Queen Athene,
Three Greek Girls

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Action

Dharma is suffering from delivery pain. Athene and Greek maids are attending upon her, awaiting child-birth.

Scene 24

Location
Exterior

Characters
Maids, Guards

Action

Maids are standing in silence with lamps and conches in hand. Guards are at a distance. All are awaiting the birth of the Child.

The Birth Cry of the New-Born is Heard from Inside the Apartment.

Scene 25

Location
Interior

Characters
Dharma, Athene, Maids, Child Asoka

Action

Dharma has given birth to her son. Athene is holding the Child.

Athene "It is a Son, It is a Son ! Announce it outside so that they blow their conches !"

Dharma 'A son ! Oh, My *Soka* (Sorrow) is now gone for ever. My Asoka is Born !"

Athene (*To a Nurse*) "Run to the Emperor to inform him that Dharma is blessed with a Son. he will be pleased to come at once."

Maids Run Out. Conches are Blown. Athene puts the Babe Near his Mother.

Scene 26

Exterior

Action

Maids Blow the Conches. Guards Run in all Directions to Announce the Birth of the Child.

Scene 27

Location
Interior

Characters
Dharma, Athene, Others, Royal Guard, Chandragupta

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Action

Athene is holding the child on her lap. The Child is crying aloud as Athene is trying to feed the baby. A guard enters.

Guard — "His Majesty the Emperor is coming to see his grandson."

Dharma Looks Around. Athens is Happy. Chadragupta Enters. He Affectionately Looks at the Child.

Chandragupta — "Dear Dharma Subhadrangi ! God has given you this precious Son. I bless him. May Gods bless him. Who knows, some day he may glorify my dynasty ! May the child live long !"

Chandragupta Puts his Palm on the Head of the Child. He Takes out a Neckless of Pearl from his Own Neck and Gives it to Athene to put it around the Neck of the Child.

Athene — "Aryaputra ! Dharma says, the Name of the boy will be Asoka. because, the boy removes all sorrows from its mother's heart."

Chandragupta (*Smiling*) "That's fine. The name appeals to me. May Gods shower their Blessings on Asoka.

Chandragupta Departs. Dharma Looks Around to see if her Husband has come. Not Findings him, She Heaves a Deep Sigh of Anguish.

Dharma — "Has not my husband been informed of the birth of his son ?"

Attendant — "Yes, Madam, the Prince has been informed, Everyone in the Palace has come to know of the birth of your son."

Dharma's Face Turns Pale. The Child is Crying. Athene is Holding it in her Palms and Trying to Sooth him.

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Episode Five

Commentary

After having ruled over the Maurya Empire for nearly a quarter of a century, Emperor Chandragupta abruptly abdicated the throne in favour of his son, Bindusara, styled as Amitraghata *or the Slayer of the Foes. Chankya, though ripe in age, continued to serve the new Emperor as his Prime Minister for some years. According to Jaina Traditions, Chandragupta became a Jaina Monk, went to the Far South, and lived at a place named Sravana Belgola. There, after a few years, he invited Death by Starvation in accordance with the extreme Jaina method to attain Salvation.*

Scene 1

Location
Bank of Ganga
Jaina Monastery
Exterior

Characters
Chandragupta (Aged 45),
Ten Body Guards on
Horse

Action

Chandragupta gets down from his horse on the Bank of Ganga. He is under a black cloak. Ten bodyguards also get down. The guards wait on the river bank. Chandragupta proceeds towards an old Jaina Monastery, located at some distance. It is late after-noon. The sun is shining over the Ganges.

Scene 2

Location
Monastery
Interior

Characters
Chandragupta,
Bhadrabahu (Old Man)

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Action

Inside the Monastery, the old Jaina Muni is sitting with closed eyes on a raised wooden seat alone. He is in deep meditation. Chandragupta enters into the room, and sits down cross-legged on the floor. Jaina Muni opens his eyes. Chandragupta bows down.

Chandragupta — "Venerable Maha Muni! I am that boy Chandra who left you at the age of 8. I have not come to you so far, though in moments of seculusion and silence, I have paid my veneration to you in my thought. I beg for your forgiveness."

Bhadrabahu — "Aryaputra! Chakravartin! you are ever fresh in Bhadrabahu's memory. During our separation, you have conquered the earth and served humanity. The Blessings of all the Tirthankaras are with you."

Chandragupta — "Maha Muni ! Indeed I have conquered this earth by earthly deeds ! But my tormented soul has not been able to conquer Peace and Solace ! You taught me about the way to Salvation in My childhood. I am now at thousands of *yojanas* distance from that path. Maha Muni, am I unworthy of finding the Path now when, I think, my mundane works are over ?"

Bhadrabahu — "Rajan ! The Path to Salvation is ever open to man, no matter how old one is, or what he happens to be. renunciation is the Path to Salvation, as you know."

Chandragupta — "Can I not think of renunication when I have everything — My Empire, My Throne, My Sceptre, My Power, My Crown, My Wealth, My Wife, My Son, My Palace, and all the rest of earthly Possessions ?"

Bhadrabahu — "Rajan ! Bleassed is your holy soul ! I am happy that you realise all these as Unreal. This Realisation will lead you towards renunciation. And, renunciation will lead you towards Salvation. Be a real Conqueror — a Ina — by giving up the earthly conquests. Be a real hero — a Mahavira—by conquering the self."

Chandragupta looks Deeply thoughtful. He sits in meditation with closed eyes before the Jaina Muni who also closes his eyes in deep meditation.

Scene 3

Location
Night, Chanakya's Thatched shelter
Interior

Characters
Chanakya,
Informer

Action

Chanakya, though the Prime Minister, lives in a thatched shelter outside the Palace Compound. A long rope hangs from the Gate to his house and his inner apartment. A Bell is hanging

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from the end of the rope inside Chanakya' room Chanakya is sitting in his room. The Bell rings. An Informer enters and bows down.

Informer — "Revered Mahamantrin ! I am to report that the Emperor went to meet the Jaina Muni Bhadrabahu alone this afternoon and stayed with him till evening. It is not known what transpired between the two. But a disciple of the Muni says that they discussed about the values of Renunciation and also about the ways to Salvation."

Chanakya — "Oh my Heaven ! Renunciation ! Salvation ! Has Chandragupta reverted back to his childhood mentality ? How ominous ! May God save the Empire."

Chanakya gets up, looks at the informer, and orders.

Chanakya — "Keep your sharp watch on the movements of the Emperor and of the Muni. Keep me informed if you hear anything more from the Muni's disciples."

Scene 4

Location
Queen Athene's Apartment
Interior

Characters
Athene, Megasthenes,
Chanakya

Action

Chanakya is in discussion with Queen Athene and Megasthenes inside the Queen's well decorated and gorgeous room. They all look serious.

Chanakya — "Dear Athene ! It is now for you to prevail upon the Emperor not merely as a wife but also as the Empress, to give up all evil and idle thoughts from his mind such as Renunication and salvation. You will fail in your duty if you do not exert yourself to change the mind of your husband. I got Chandragupta as a stubborn boy. He was being misguided then by these Munis for inward searches. I have kept him stubborn till now. But he is again trying to go astray. Please save him for good."

Megasthenes — "Maha Mantri ! India is a land of Philosophers. As I go on collecting more and more information for my Book Indica, I come to know more and more about your great country. Mighty Spiritual Leaders of this land have taught of renunciation to your people. Did not Mahavira in Jina and Gautama Buddha show practical examples of renunciation in their own life ? They were princes ! But they left everything in search of Truth. As seekers after Truth, did they not preach of Salvation as the ulterior Goal of this life ? Did they not teach Man to run after the supreme objective of the Soul ?"

Chanakya — "Dear Ambassador ! What are you talking of ? What will happen to this Earth if all of the earthly creatures follow a Jaina or a Buddha ? What

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will happen to this great Empire if the Chakravarti Emperor renounces earthly activities and turn an Ascetic and retire to dense forest like those two celebrated persons ?''

Megasthenes — ''Maha Mantri ! Have not your Shastras prescribed the code of Banaprastha to men and asked them to go to forests after a particular age ?''

Chanakya — ''Dear Megasthenes ! Has Chandragupta reached that age ? He is not yet 45 years old ! *Banaprastha* is prescribed for a much later age of life when earthly activities are needed no more !''

Chanakya turns his face from megasthenes and looks to athene.

Athene — ''Maha Mantriji ! I know my husband. He can be as strong as the Himalayas and as soft as the Ganges. If he has thought of Renunciation, he will remain as hard as rock, not to be moved by a wife. May I, therefore, be allowed to say that you built up the poor boy Chandra into the mighty Emperor Chandragupta Maurya. It is your grave responsibility to steer the course of his life. It is only you who can change his mind. A thousand Athenes cannot do what a Chanakya can do by his magic wand. I appeal to you, Maha Mantriji, kindly to try your best to save my dear people of my dear country from the impending crisis. As far as I know the Emperor, he can defy all, but not his Guru Chanakya. You have been his philosopher and guide all his life.''

Kindly do guide him at this critical moment of his mental crisis. Chandragupta will never go against the will of Chanakya. A depressed Chanakya leaves as Athene and megasthenes stay on.

Scene 5

Location
Palace Garden

Characters
Greek & Indian Maidens,
Athene

Action

As usual in the evening the maidens are playing pleasure games in the garden. Athene with Dharma come there, but both of them do not observe the scenes. Athene is wiping out tears from her eyes. They go away.

Scene 6

Location
Chandragupta's Audience Room
Interior

Characters
Chandragupta, Chanakya

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Action

Chanakya has come to Chandragupta to persuade him not to take the drastic decision of abdication. Both are in serious mood. Chandragupta's eyes are dull.

Chandragupta — "Guru Dev ! I know the purpose of your coming. You have understood my mind correctly. My decision to abdicate the Throne in favour of my Son is final and irrevocable. I pray and hope that you do not try to change mind."

Chanakya — "Chanakya shall not abidicate his responsibility in giving sound advice to his Emperor as long as life remains in his body. Chanakya must have to say what he feels it necessary to say."

Chandragupta — "I do not deny that right to my preceptor. I have faithfully worked out whatever you have wished to be done. But, a time comes in life, when one has to detach himself from mundane activities and isolate himself from mundane advices. I offer apology to my Guru Dev my inability to obey him when my mind rises to respond to higher calls of soul ! There can be no compromise between the outer and the inner, between the outward and the inward !"

Chanakya — "Still Chanakya shall not desist from duty ! Your Majesty has not yet completed the mission of his life. Mother Bharat is not yet one and united from the Himalayas to the Seas. Vast Kalinga remains yet unconquered. So, too, the Far South. People are still lawless. Turbulent Tribes are still unsubdued. The Crown-Prince is still very young. Ten more years of rule of the first Maurya will make the Mauryan empire the strongest political power on earth, and the Mauryan dynasty, the most durable. Rajan ! Let me say it unhesitatingly that the old Chanakya is still working hard to serve his motherland whereas the youthful Emperor, not even near middle-age, is shirking responsibility and is thinking of abdication ! This is nothing but escapism ! Will the Present and the Future forgive the Emperor for this ?"

Chandragupta presents a philosophical smile as a distanced man from the rest.

Chandragupta — "Guru Dev, to you all these unrealities are the reality ! Whereas to me, these realities are unrealities ! In discarding illusions, I do not find neither present nor Future, neither present nor Future, neither Time nor Space."

After a pause and in deep emotion, Chandragupta speaks again.

Chandragupta — "Mahabhaga ! I appeal to you still as the Ruler of the Mauryan Empire to continue as the Prime Minister of Bindusara even as I depart. Let the young Prince be built up under your wise guidance to prove himself worthy of the great task. Heaven will not fall on Eternal Bharat if Chandragupta dies or go out. No man is indispensable. The new Emperor will complete conquests and fulfil your vision of unity. As for me, it is Time to go."

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To Chanakya surprise, Chandragupta abruptly stands up and goes inside another chamber.

Scene 7

Location
Night, Athene's Room

Characters
Chandragupta,
Athene

Action

Chandragupta enters into Athene's bedroom. Athene is in tears.

Chandragupta — "Dear Athene ! You have loved your husband more than your life. You have been the dearest to me. As a supreme proof of your love, will you not forgive your husband for leaving you for ever ! Will you not desire to see my Soul in Peace !"

Athene Sobs. She wipes out her tears.

Athene — "Swami ! Let others say as they like. But, as your beloved wife, I shall not utter a word to cause pain to your noble heart."

She Sobs again.

Chandragupta — "Dear Athene ! love Bindusara as your own son. He will remain ever dutiful and respectful to you as his mother. You have given him your deepest affection. You will fill the void of my loss in the mind of my son."

Chandragupta goes out. Greek maids come in. They also shed tears and console the queen.

Scene 8

Location
Night, Jaina Monastery
Interior

Characters
Dhadrabahu, General

Action

Inside the monastery in front of a small dim lamp, the Jaina Muni is sitting is meditation. A General enters. Without scant respect for the Saint, be announces to him the order, not disclosing from whom.

General — "Holy Man ! I am commanded to inform you that you are required to leave your Monastery within three days from this night."

Bhadrabahu — "I bless you my son. This Monastery is not mine. Nothing is mine. I shall carry out your order. Sky will give me shelter."

He Closes His Eyes. General departs.

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Scene 9

Location
Durbar Hall

Characters
Chandragupta, Bindusara, Chanakya, Courtiers

Action

Chandragupta is holding his court to announce abdication. The durbar hall is full to its him. All are in deep silence. Some are in tears. Prince Bindusara is in royal dress. Chanakya looks grim. Herald announces the coming of the emperor. Chandragupta comes and faces the Court.

Chandragupta — "My Wise Friends ! I leave my Empire and My Dynasty in your hands. In Your wisdom you understand the merit of my decision to abdicate. Renunciation is the Supreme Lesson given to us by our Seers and Sages. Let me have the courage to practise that lesson."

Chandragupta turns to. Chanakya stands up.

Chandragupta — "Guru Dev ! From now on I entrust to you the future of Bindusara, as of the Empire. I pray for forgiveness for taking farewell of you and of all. Let your advice and guidance be the true asset to my successor. With you in the helm of affairs, I leave the Throne in absolute peace of mind."

Chanakya keeps on standing in silence. Chandragupta asks bindusara to come up to the royal platform.

Chandragupta — "I call upon the Crown-Prince to come up to me."

Bindusara rises up from his seat below and goes up the steps to his father. He bows down before him. As he stands up, Chandragupta removes the crown from his head, and hands it over to bindusara. Bindusara holds the crown in his hands.

Chandragupta — "My son, My successor ! Be worthy of the Crown and the Throne, bequeathed by your father to you. Work hard for the unity of the country. Follow the instructions of Guru Chanakya Dev to finish the unfinished works of your father. Try to develop friendship with the Kings of the Greek World. Maintain peace with them by your missions of culture. I bless you for your success."

Chandragupta puts his hand on the head of bindusara. The courtiers sob in silence. Chandragupta steps down and walks towards. The exit of the durbar hall.

Scene 10

Location
Highway from Palace Gate

Characters
Chandragupta, Royal Family, Athene, Dharma, People, Boy Asoka (Age 5)

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Action

Chandragupta emerges from the Palace Gate in the dress of a Jaina Monk. At the gate are standing all members of the Royal Family, all Ministers and Courtiers. On either side of the highway are standing multitudes of men. women and children. All are in tears. As the Monk-Monarch emerges, people burst into weeping and wailing. Chandragupta folds his palms, look towards the people at the Gate, and walks ahead on the long road in quick steps.

People "Long Live Samrat Chandragupta. Chakravarti Chandragupta Amar Rahe.

At the gate, athene, dharma and other women are weeping in pathos. Camera catches the face of young boy Asoka (Aged Five) standing near his mother and weeping. He suddenly comes out of the clutches of dharma and starts running in the direction of his grandfather Chandragupta.

Scene 11

Location
Highway

Characters
Chandragupta, People,
Jaina monk, Boy Asoka

Action

Chandragupta is walking on the highway westward. People on either side are in tears. Women are performing Arati. Men are showering flowers on Chandragupta. Some fall at his feet. A Jaina Monk is walking behind.

Monk "Aryaputra ! Saint Bhadrabahu has gone to the river bank to get into the Boat."

Chandragupta "I know. Let us walk to the bank to reach him."

They walk faster. Chandragupta tunrns back towards the people who are following him in silence. He folds his hands.

Chandragupta "My Dear Children ! Fare the well. Go back to your home from here. Let this Monk now walk alone."

People stop following and stand in silence as Chandragupta disappears from their sight.

Scene 12

Location
Evening, River Bank

Characters
Chandragupta, Asoka Monk

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Action

Chandragupta reaches the river bank with a Jaina Monk. Sun is about to set. He looks to the River Ganga, and finds the waiting boat.

As Chandragupta turns his face backward to see the place for the last time, he finds little Asoka standing at a distance, alone and weeping, Chandragupta halts. Asoka comes running to him. He bends down to touch his grandfather's feet. Chandragupta embraces Asoka in emotional affection. Asoka weeps.

Chandragupta "Go back, dear Asoka. Go back to your Mother. When you grow up, remember me. May the Tirthankaras bless you to be great. Have my Blessings."

Chandragupta goes down towards the water. He enters into the Boat. Asoka is still standing on the bank. The boat sails down the river.

Scene 13

Location
River Bank

Characters
Asoka

Action

The boat sails down westward. Through the jungly path on the river bank, little Asoka is seen running westward as long as the boat is in sight. The boat disappears on the horizon. Sun is setting on the western sky.

Scene 14

Location
Palace Garden

Characters
Bindusara, Susima (Age 8)
Asoka (6), Vitasoka (4)
Guards, 2 Animals

Action

Emperor Bindusara is sitting on a golden chair in the Palace garden. His eldest son Susima is sitting on his lap. Two Guards bring two One-horned animals of tender age (rhinoceros) to demonstrate their fighting before the King. Asoka and his younger Vitasoka come running towards their father, the Emperor. As Asoka comes near to his father's lap, Susima gives him a kick and he falls down. Vitasoka also comes to his father and receives a kick from Susima. He falls flat on ground, and cries aloud. Bindusara is annoyed. He looks at Asoka and Vitasoka with frowning eyes.

Bindusara "Did your Mother send both of you to me ?"

Bindusara fondles Susima. Asoka takes away his younger brother by holding his tiny hands as he is weeping. While going

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away he observes his father's angry face at them. At a distance Asoka stands for a moment and sees his father giving kisses to susima. The animals start their game. Both Bindusara and Susima enjoy their fight.

Scene 15

Location, Night
Dharma's Room
Interior

Characters
Dharma, Asoka, Vitasoka

Action

Dharma is offering her prayers before the Image of Siva Lingam in her room. Her two little sons, Asoka and Vitasoka are near her. When her song of prayer is over, Asoka complains to her about his father's annoyance towards them.

Asoka — "Mother ! Why does father dislike me and Vitasoka ? Susima gave us kicks, we fell down, Vitasoka was hurt and he cried. But father did not rebuke him. Instead, he rebuked us asking "Did your mother send you to me ?" He did not ask us to see the animal-fight. We ran back."

Dharma — "Dear Asoka ! Do not complain against your father. You do not know what the Shastras say. Shastras say:

Pita dharma, Pita swarga, Pitahi parama-tapah, Pitari Priti-mapanne, priyante sarva devata.

It means, the father is like Dharma, like Heaven, like Tapah.

If father is pleased, all Gods are pleased."

Asoka — "But, our father is not pleased with us ! How can, therefore, the Gods be pleased at us ? Vitasoka fell to ground and cried. Father did not raise him up !"

Dharma — "Forget it. He was perhaps worried about his grave responsibilities.

He is an Emperor."

Asoka — "No, he was not worried at all. He was giving kisses to Susima."

Vitasoka — "Maa ! Why din't father give a kiss ?"

Asoka (*angry*) — "Next time when Susima does it, I shall kick him in front of father."

Dharma — "Oh, No, my dear ! Susima is your elder brother. You should learn to respect him."

Asoka (*annoyed*) — "Should I respect a brother who kicks me and little Vitasoka ? He deserves disrespect."

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Asoka holds the hand of vitasoka and goes out of the room. dharma looks sad and heaves a sigh.

Scene 16

Location
Bindusara's Apartment

Characters
Bindusara, Chanakya

Action

Bindusara and Chanakya are in discussion.

Chanakya — "Rajan ! You are fortunate that Gods have bleessed you with so many bright sons. Our great Empire will greatly benefit from these future brave administrators if only the brothers are cordial and deeply attached to each other."

Bindusara — "Mahabhaga ! These princes are coming of age for education and learning. I feel a little worried about their conduct. I am not happy with Dharma's first son who is somewhat wicked !"

Chanakya — "Rajan ! It is the duty of Queen Dharma and of all other Queens as well as of Your Majesty, to rear up these precious sons. Conduct of a child begins with the parents. Education begins at home. Parents have the first duty to educate the children:

'Mata Shatruh Pita Bairi, Javyam Bala Na Pathitah'.

Mother is an enemy, father is and foe, if they do not educate their children."

Bindusara — "Acharya ! Can you kindly measure their intelligence so that I can be sure of their respective ability to undergo hard education !"

Chanakya — "Why not ! It will be a pleasure for me to do it in my own way. It will be an old man's pleasure to test the witt of the sweet little ones !"

Scene 17

Location
Garden

Characters
Chanakya,
6 Sons of Bindusara

Action

Old Chanakya is surrounded by six sons of Bindusara.

Chanakya — "Dear boys ! I am an old man losing my intelligence. You are intelligent young ones. I shall put before you three problems. I do not find solutions to the problems myself ! But, I am sure, any one of you can find them."

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Susima "Old man ! Tell me ! Tell me the problems. I can surely solve !"

Chanakya "I shall present my problems to all of you in form of three Questions. First, swear before me that each one of you will try to find Answers without asking for anybody's help. If you ask anyone, you will prove that you have no intelligence of your own. Always think that you have your head on your shoulder. If you seek suggestion from another man's head, your own head is useless. If you find your own answers, you will prove your worth as intelligent boys. I shall give you three days to think of answers and to come prepared. So, do swear that you should find your own Answers !"

Asoka "Acharya Dev ! You are the Teacher of our Grandfather. I can swear before you as our Grand-Guru Dev that I shall not take help from any person to find answers to your questions. Doing that bad work will be a sin."

Other Princes "We swear, We swear the same."

Chanakya I feel very happy that you are taking oath before an old Guru not to consult anybody, but to find your own answers. Now, listen the questions, and remember.

"First Problem : Come by the best yana (vehicle), second problem : sit on the best asana (seat) third problem : eat the best bhojana (food)

Do you get the Questions ?"

Princes "Yes. Yes, We understand and remember."

Chanakya "Excellent ! So, I shall request your father, mothers and some others to come and see your performance as you will come on your chosen Vehicle, as you will sit on your chosen seat, and as you will eat your chosen food ! agreed !"

Princes "We agree. These are easy to find answers."

Chanakya smiles. The princes clap. they disperse.

Scene 18

Location
Open Field

Characters
Chanakya, Bindusara, Athene, Dharma, Queens Courtiers, Princes, Announcer

Action

This Scene shows the competition among the young sons of Bindusara. On a slightly raised platform are seated the Emperor, Athene, all other Queens, ministers and courtiers to observe

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the game of Intelligence. Chanakya is seen below the platform, sitting on a high chair. He is conducting the Game. An announcer is standing beside him.

At the far end of the field are waiting the Princes, ready for summon.

Announcer — "I shall call each Prince by his name. Each Prince is to come here on the best *Yana*, Sit down here on the best *Asana*, and to eat here the best Bhojana. Each Prince will have to explain to Guru Dev Acharya Chanakya — Why he considers his Yana, his Asana, and his Bhojana as the Best."

All on the dais observe in silence and with amusing curriosity.

Announcer — "Prince Susima, please proceed."

Susima comes straight, sitting on a big Elephant. He reaches the place where Chanakya is sitting. He comes down from the elephant. He takes down from the howda a small throne. He sits on it. He takes out from his bag a plate of food containing cooked meat off deer.

Chanakya — "Tell me now, Why do you consider the elephant, the throne and the deer-meat as the best *Yana, Asana* and *Bhojana.*

Susima looks towards Chankaya, and all around with a sense of pride. others wait to hear his answer.

Susima(*standing up*) — "Elephant is the best Vehicle because the King of the Gods in Heaven, *Indra* rides *Airavata.* Throne is the best *Asana* because Kings sit on it to rule their kingdoms. Deer is the best food because the Kings hunt it for food."

Bindusara on platform expresses pleasure. Others clap. Susima sits down.

Announcer — "Prince Sugatra, please advance."

Sugatra comes speedily sitting on a chariot. He gets down and sits on a plate of gold. He takes out honey in a pot to eat.

Chanakya — "Tell me, why do you consider these as the best !"

Sugatra — "Sun God rides through the Sky in His Chariot, and therefore it is the best vehicle. Gold is the most precious metal and, therefore, the best *Asana.* Honey is the sweetest and therefore the best food."

He sits down.

Announcer — "Prince Sudatta, please proceed."

Sudatta rides on a horse and comes swiftly. He takes out a deer-skin and sits on it. He takes out from his bag fruits as his food.

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Chanakya "Explain, Why do you regard these as the best."

Sudatta "Horse is the best vehicle, it is the swiftest. Deer -skin is the best seat as the sages sit on it. Fruits are the best food as they are offered to Gods."

He Sits Down.

Announcer "Prince Subhaga, Please proceed."

Subhaga comes in a palanquin carried by four persons on shoulder's. He takes out a lotus flower and sits on it. He takes out a potful of milk as his food.

Chanakya "Explain, Why do you consider these as the best."

Subhaga "Palanquin is used by kings, the old, the women, and the sick and therefore the best vehicle. On the Lotus sits the Goddess of Fortune, and hence, it is the best seat. Milk is the food of the infant as well as of all for strength, and therefore the best food."

He sits down.

Announcer "Prince Suratha, Please Advance."

Suratha comes riding a tamed tiger. He sits down on a silk carpet. He takes out sweets from his bag.

Chanakya "Explain, why do you consider these the best."

Suratha "Only a Hero can ride a Tiger and therefore it is the best vehicle. Silk is the costliest and softest cloth to sit on, and hence the best seat. Sweets are the most pleasing to taste and therefore the best food."

He sits down.

Announcer "Prince Asoka, Please Advance."

Asoka is not to be seen on any vehicle. Chanakya expresses surprise not to find him, so do others on the dias. But very soon Asoka is seen coming on foot in quick steps. He reaches the place and sits down on earth. He takes out a small earthen pot containing curd. Chanakya feels puzzled to see his conduct. Bindusara shows annoyance. Princes laugh.

Chanakya "Where is your vehicle ? Where is your seat ? Explain, what is this Food ?"

Asoka (Standing up & bowing down) "Mahabhaga ! To me, my foot is the best of all vehicles ! To me, this earth, is the best of all seats ! And, what my mother gave me to eat in affection, this little curd, is the best food for me."

He sits down. Chanakya expresses deep satisifaction to hear such explanation.

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Chanakya — "My Dear Asoka ! Excellent ! Your answers are the most original. I bless you."

Camera catches the face of Bindusara who shows no expression of pleasure. Athene and Dharma Look at each other in pleasure. Chanakya looks to princes.

Chanakya — "Dear Princes ! All of you have given fine proofs of your intelligence. I give my blessings to all of you. You may now go to play."

Scene 19

Location
Palace Garden

Characters
Susima, Asoka, Sugatra, Sudatta

Action

Princes are coming back from the Field after their game of Intelligence-Competition. They are proceeding towards the Palace though the Garden. It is Evening. Susima speaks to Sugatra and Sudatta, which Asoka overhears from behind.

Susima — "That old fellow Chanakya seems to have lost his mental power. To him, Asoka's stupidity is his originality."

Asoka Comes up to Susima & Others.

Asoka — "Don't you feel ashamed to speak ill of the great Guru Dev Acharya Chanakya who was the Guru of our revered Grandfather, and is the Prime Minister of our Father ? Is it nice of you to criticise him, being our elder brother ?"

Susima (*Angry*) — "Tell me then, Are your two feet stronger than the four feet of my Elephant ? Is the ground superior to a throne ? Is that little curd better than deer-meat ? Yet that mindless Pandit praised you ! Does he possess any thinking capacity ! Any street urchin can also come on foot, sit down on grass, and eat anything given to him by his mother ! Will he be then better than a Prince ?"

Sugatra and Sudatta laugh aloud.

Sugatra — "Asoka, try to behave like a Prince before others. By walking in bare feet and sitting on grass, you disgraced us all. Do not forget that you belong to a royal family."

Sudatta — "Asoka ! Your walking, sitting and eating, everything looked like the performance of a stupid boy ! Don't you see how our Father felt unhappy at your conduct ? Yet that old fellow smiled upon you and even gave you his worthless blessing !"

Asoka (*furious*) — "Hold your tongue ! Do you have brains to understand what I did ? It was a Game of Intelligence ! You are too dull to understand What is an intelligent approach to questions like that !"

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Susima "Oh ! Our most intelligent brother ! Go out of our sight at once with your bare feet and fertile brain ! Or else ..."

An angry Asoka walks away fast.

Scene 20

Location
Night, Athene's Bedroom
Interior

Characters
Queen Athene, Asoka (Now Aged 8),
Dharma

Action

Queen Athene is standing before a big portrait of Chandragupta when Asoka bursts into her room in uncontrollable emotion. He is weeping bitterly. Athene looks upset at the behaviour of the boy. She embraces Asoka and asks.

Athene "Be calm, dear Asoka, be calm. What's the matter. Tell me."

Asoka (*sobbing*) "Gra'mma ! My revered Grandfather is no more."

Athene is stunned.

Athene "What do you say, Asoka, what do you say !"

Asoka "A Monk has brought the news that Grandfather starved himself to invite death inside a cave at far-away Sravana Belgola in the far south. He died of his own will to attain Salvation !"

Asoka cries aloud. Dharma comes in. Athene breaks down in sadness. Dharma weeps.

Asoka "No, Gra'mma ! You should not weep. I cannot see you weeping. Please be composed. My Grandfather must have done it in his supreme wisdom. Let us not weep over his action."

Asoka wipes out tears from Athene's eyes, and from his own eyes.

Athene "Asoka ! How great is he ! Great in life, great in death. Great in action, great in thought ! Can there be any King on Earth like him ! May his soul reach salvation."

They kneel down before the portrait of Chandragupta while sobbing and praying.

Scene 21

Location
Chanakya's Shelter
Interior

Characters
Chanakya (Very Old)
Khallataka (Middle-Aged)

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Action

Khallataka enters into Chanakya's room, bows down, and takes his seat. Chanakya looks feeble.

Chanakya — "So, at last, has come the time for me to retire, dear Khallataka. There are not many days for me on earth."

Khallataka — "Acharya Dev ! May God give you many more years !"

Chanakya — "Man is mortal. An end will come at last ! Old age is the prelude to death. I have called you to tell you to get ready to take up my mantle, to become the Prime Minister after me."

Khallataka expresses surprise.

Khallataka — "Me ! Of all persons ! Can any man of this vast country take the place of Chanakya ?"

Chanakya — "Khallataka, there will be no dearth of great men in this country of Bharat. To me, you are the fittest person to take my place. Do give your consent in the interest of the Empire to shoulder the burden. I have already discussed the issue with the Emperor. He is as glad as I am to see you as the Prime Minister."

Khallataka maintains silence.

Chanakya — "Please do not fear the responsibility. The Empire is in peace. I am leaving no problems either for the Emperor or for the next Prime Minister. My duty is over."

Khallataka — "May your blessing be my strength. May God give courage to follow your foot-marks. But, I tell you my revered Acharya, no body can be a Chanakya for millenia to come."

Chanakya — "I am leaving behind me my considered thoughts on a strong Government and State. Let that work survive me as a guideline for our future rulers."

Khallataka looks sad. He touches the feet of Chanakya and departs.

Scene 22

Location
Durbar

Characters
Bindusara, Chanakya, Khallataka, Courtiers, Princes (Grown up youths)

Action

Emperor Bindusara is holding his Court. The Courtiers are sitting in silence.

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Bindusara "With a heavy heart, I have to announce to the Court that our respected Prime Minister, Guru Dev Acharya Chanakya, has decided to relinquish his august office, and to go on pilgrimage. It is a sad occasion for all of us and for all our people. For me, it will be a loss that is incalculable. Posterity will remember Guru Chanakya as well as Samrat Chandragupta as the architect of this united *Bharatavarsha.* We offer prayers to Gods for his long life."

Bindusara takes his throne after announcing the royal message. The Courtiers look to Chanakya sitting on the dais. Chanakya stands up. His eyes are empty.

Chanakya "My wise friends ! Chanakya takes leave of you for no other reason but for his age. Let my countrymen and the future generations judge this man. Faithfully did I serve the first maurya emperor. Faithfully have I served the second maurya. My life's dream came true when Chandragupta became the chakravarti monarch of Bharat. My delight knows no bound that his worthy successor, Emperor Bindusara, has achieved the destruction of the nobles and kings of sixteen cities to earn the Title of Amitraghata (slayer of the foes). I take farewell of my Emperor with the highest happiness of life that he is today the master of all territory between the westrn sea. I wish him all the best of success in many more years of his august rule. I bid you farewell at the end of my long service to my beloved Motherland. May God bless the Mauryans for further glories and greatness."

Courtiers "Jayatu Acharya Chanakya"

"Kirtim Jasya Sa Jivati".

Bindusara "I am to announce to the Court that I have made Khallataka my Prime Minister."

Khallataka rises to the platform, bows down before Chanakya places his hand on the head of Khallatak. Bindusara decorates him with the robe of honour. The courtiers stand up and bow towards the Emperor and the new Prime Minister.

Scene 23

Location
River Ganga

Character
Chanakya

Action

Chanakya is seen in the water of River Ganga offering his Prayer for the welfare of his country.

Chanakya "Mother Ganga ! Give the children of Bharat your blessings to remain one for ever. Give them your blessings to rise to the wisdom of the

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Rishis to remember always what King Ramachandra was reminded to believe

'Janani Jnmabhumischa Swargadapi Gariyasi.''

Bless this mortal son of Bharat to depart from this earth. Let his ashes merge with the sacred soil of the Land.''

He dips in river.

Scene 24

Location
River

Action

A boat is sailing away with Chanakya inside. The song of the boatmen comparing man's life with the flowing water of the river resounds to the sky as the sun sets on the horizon.

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Episode Six

Commentary

Among the several sons of Emperor Bindusara, the eldest son Prince Susima was voluptuous, arrogant, insolent and ambitious. He was the darling of his father and the Crown Prince. Asoka, on the other hand, came of age as a distressed youth, suspicious of others, cruel and envious.

Prime Minister Khallataka apprehended a future struggle among the Princes for the Throne. The Empire was well-governed, but, a Revolt broke out in the Frontier City of Taxila, engineered by the agents of foreign powers and the rich merchants of that city. Prince Asoka was sent to suppress that Revolt.

Scene 1

Army Ground — **Susima (9), Asoka (7), Other Princes (5-7), Captains**

Six young sons of Bindusara are undergoing military training. An Army Captian is training them the art of sword-play.

The Wheel of Time Turns for 10 Rounds while the Princes are in the process of sword-play. They are now shown in their youthful robust muscular bodies between the age group of 14-20 years.

Susima (20) and Asoka (18) are now seen with swords and shields in their hands to fight with each other in order to practise defensive and offensive tactics. Since it is a mock fight, Asoka is holding a sword without sharp edges, while Susiama is seen picking up a sharp sword. Asoka faces him to challenge.

Asoka — 'If you want a real trial of strength, I must also pick up a sharp sword.

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Your treacherous action is unworthy of an elder brother and a Crown Prince when we are in a mock fight. You want me to bleed.''

Susima ''Do not talk like a coward. Better, pick up a sharp sword and try.''

Army Captain intervenes.

Captain ''No, the rules of training do not permit it. You are to learn the technique of defending yourself. Please, therfore, fight with false swords. This is a training classes''

Before the Princes start their mock battle, a Messenger get down from horse and comes near to the arena.

Messenger ''Her Highness the Dowager-Empress Athene is gravely ill and and is lying in a critical state. She desires to see all her grandchildren. Kindly reach the Palace without delay.''

Asoka throws down his sword and runs away from the field.

Susima ''The bravest one is now running the fastest to escape defeat.'' other Princes laugh aloud.

Scene 2

Palace **Athene, Dharma, Maids, Asoka**
Queen Athene's Room

The Greek Queen of the Late Emperor Chandragupta Maurya is lying in a critical condition on her death bed. Queen Dharma, Asoka's Mother, is attending upon her. Other Maids are in tearful eyes. Asoka comes in and kneels down at her bedside and puts his head near the feet of Athene and sobs.

Asoka ''Gra'mma ! I pray to all the Gods in Heaven to give you long life. Please open your eyes and look at me. I am your Asoka.''

Athene opens her eyes and looks to Asoka. She utters a few words with much difficulty.

Athene ''My dear Asoka, my time has come to go to your grandfather Chandragupta whom you adore so much. I bless you to be as great as he was.''

She looks around to see other Princes but finds none. She struggles for her last breath.

Athene breathes her last. Dharma pulls up a silken sheet over her face. Asoka weeps.

Scene 3

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Court of Greek King **King Antiochus I Soter, Greek Ministers, Courtiers, 5 Indian Emissaries**

King Antiochus I Soter, son of King Seleucos Nikator, is now ruling over the kingdom of Syria after the death of his father. He is holding his Court inside a spacious Hall.

Five Indian Emissaries from Emperor Bindusara are taken to the Court.

Herald — "The Emissaries of the Emperor of Magadh His Majesty Chakravarti Bindusara Amitraghata are presented in the Court of Our Gracious Majesty the King of Syria Antiochus Soter."

The Emissaries take their seats.

King — "Our Honoured Guests from Magadh, I have mourned the death of my dear Sister, Her Majesty Queen Athene. She was like a link of peace between the two royal houses of Syria and India. I hope, the friendship between our two countries shall continue as from the days of my late lamented father His Noble Majesty King Seleucos Nikator and your late lamented Chakravarti Sovereign Chandragupta Maurya. We wish the best of health for your Gracious Majesty Chakravarti Bindusara Amitraghata."

An Indian Emissary (*standing up*) — "Our Glorious Monarch, Chakravarti Bindusara Amitraghata presents to Your Majesty, the Lord of Syria, his best wishes for health and happiness, and expresses his desire for renewed peace and friendship between the two great royal houses as well as between the people of the two great countries."

Second Indian Emissary — "Our August Majesty further requests to Your August Majesty as a relative and friend, to buy for him and send to him 'some sweet wine of your country, some dried figs, and above all, a wise Philosopher'. Our great King is interested to enjoy thw wine and the fig fruits of Your Majesty's country, and to listen to the learned discourses of a wise Philosopher of the Greek World. We have carried these personnel requests to Your Majesty along with the messages of peace and cordiality."

The King looks to his Ministers
A Minister stands up.

Minister — "Your Majesty, we can send the sweetest wines of our land, and the best variety of fig fruits for the Indian Emperor which he wants to buy. But, the Law of the Greek Lands does not permit that a Philospher could be bought and sent abroad."

The King looks at the Indian Emissaries.

King — "I feel deeply happy that His Majesty Bindusara, my dear relative, wants to buy wine and figs from my country. `We shall certainly send

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you the figs and the wine.' But, in Greece, the Laws forbid a Sophist or a man of wisdom to be sold'. Please convey this to my friend, Your Gracious Majesty. However, I shall soon send from my country a Royal Ambassador to the Court of the Mauryas. My august father, the late monarch Seleucos, sent his Ambassador Megasthenes to Pataliputra. I shall send to the Pataliputra Court a wise Greek named Daimachus.''

The Indian Emissaries are taken out of the Court with honour.

Scene 4

A Flash Scene of Greek Dances presented before the Indian Emissaries to entertain them. Scenes of Greek Dinner and hospitality.

Scene 5

Greek King's Apartment **Antiochus, 3 Ministers, 3 Generals**

King Antiochus is in discussions with his Ministers and Generals about Indo--Greek relations.

King ''The Indian Envoys have gone back with full confidence that the Greeks are their permanent friends. Let them enjoy their day dream. The Greek World never forgave my father for giving away the beautiful lands of Kabul and Kandahar to the Indian King Chandragupta. The King is no more. His Wife, my Sister Athene is also no more. The family relation between my house and the house of the Mauryas does not exist any more. Should we then not try to recover Kabul, Kandahar, Heart and Baluchistan ! Should we regard these territories as lost for ever !''

First Minister ''Your Majesty, King Bindusara as we know is as powerful as his Father. He has a big army. He calls himself Amitraghata for having slayed all his enemy kings inside India. We have to think if we can risk a war with such a King when his intention towards us is very friendly !''

Second Minister ''I agree with Your Majesty that unless we recover our lost territories, we cannot recover out lost prestige before other Greek Kings.''

A General ''Our Army is big and we can afford to fight against the Indians.''

First Minister ''We have first to assess if the frontiers of the Maurya Empire are well--protected and well--defended now as in the days of the First Maurya. If the Second Maurya has neglected the North--Western Frontiers, then only we can think of an invasion.''

King ''How can we know about the exact position of the Mauryan military strength on the frontiers !''

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Minister — "The strongest of the Mauryan fortifications on the frontiers is located in the city of Taxila. It is from that City that they control Kabul and Kandahar. If we can engineer a popular revolt in that City through our agents and by distributing money among the rich merchants of that place who come to us regularly for trade, and if the revolt proves successful, we can surely know that the Mauryan Frontiers are out of bound of the far--away Capital. In that case, we can work out our military strategy to recover Kabul and Kandahar."

King — "This is a good proposition and it is worth while trying it. But, make it very sure that the Mauryans do not suspect our hand behind the uprising."

Minister — "We shall of course take the utmost precaution in this respect. The Taxilan Merchant Princes are most friendly towards our leaders of trade. I feel sure, we can use them as our instruments. After all, Taxila is far away from the Mauryan Capital. In spite of their effective spy--system, the Mauryan Governors may not be able to know anything about the causes of the outbreak of the revolt. We shall wait and see what do they do after the revolt breaks out and how far are they ready or strong to deal with it."

King — "Again do I advise you to proceed cautiously and carefully. At the same time I ask you to go ahead to win over the Taxilan merchants."

Scene 6

Night
Mountains Hideout

20 Merchants

Merchants of Taxila are meeting in a hideout at the foot of a mountain outside the City of Taxila in the dead of night. A dimly burning wooden torch shows their covered faces partly. They are discussing about the strategies for revolt.

First Leader — "We have to tell the people that our dear land Taxila was an independent country when King Ambhi ruled. But Chandragupta Maurya annexed our land to his Empire. The Mauryan Amatyas have now turned so wicked that they do not care for our prosperity. The extort our wealth by force and violence which we earn from our trade with distant countries. They exploit us for their pleasure and enjoyment. We risk our lives by going through mountains and desert for commerce, but they envy us for our earnings. Let our people know all these and let us tell them that it is time for us to rise in revolt."

Second Leader — "This Mauryan King Bindusara, unlike his father, never comes to visit Taxila. His Amatyas take advantage of this and turn more and more oppressive day by day. We revolt to teach a lesson to these notorious Amatyas. And, if we succeed, Taxila may be free again."

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Third Leader "We can also appeal to the Greek Rulers of the West to support us as King Ambhi requested Sikander to fight against the enemies of Taxila. Our brave Taxilans will certainly rise in revolt to regain independence if only we can properly inspire them to action."

They discuss in whispers. They open big bags containing gold and silver pieces and distribute them among themselves.

Scene 7

Night
Narrow Lanes of Taxila **Merchants, Greek Agents**

Rebels and foreign agents in disguise are seen moving through the narrow lanes of the Taxilan city centre, knocking from door to door in the dead of night. Taxilans are receiving money from the rebels. They talk in whispers. Rebels on horseback are riding from place to place and unloading arms at several doors.

Scene 8

Night
City-Centre **Rebels**

Rebels on horseback are riding in speed through the city centre and putting fires to the houses of the Mauryan officers. Flames rise up from many quarters of the city. Rebels shout aloud "Burn, Kill, Destroy. Death to Dusta Amatyas." Scenes of confusion, noise, cries, and fires follow. Mauryan Officers are seen hiding or running out to safety.

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Episode Seven

Commentary

When the Taxilan revolt broke out, Emperor Bindusara was advised not to go to the distant frontiers because of his indifferent health. Instead, Prince Asoka proceeded to Taxila to face the rebels. It was there in Taxila that Asoka proved his worth as a remarkable soldier, a brave fighter and an able diplomat. He suppressed the revolt ruthlessly and restored peace on the frontiers.

Scene 1

Palace
Bindusara's Apartment

Bindusara, Khallataka,
Generals, Chief Spy

Emperor Bindusara is sick. He is resting on a spacious couch while discussing political affairs with the Prime Minister Khallataka.

Khallataka — "Your Majesty, the whole Empire is in peace. There is no fear of invasion from the Kalingans. They are busy at the moment in conquering oversea lands and in establishing their colonies across the Indian Ocean. My mind, however, is troubled for some internal omens. As an old man myself, I feel disturbed about the future of the Mauryan Empire."

Bindusara — "Are you worried about my health while thinking of the days ahead !"

Khallataka — "No, Your Majesty, no. God has blessed you with a robust physique. This illness is most temporary. There is no age in life when a man does not suffer from one or the other bodily malady."

Bindusara — "Then, what makes your mind troubled?"

Khallataka — "Emperor, to speak the truth, it is the conduct of your sons which distrubes me. Susima is now twenty. Asoka is eighteen. Others are all in

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their youth. What I find in them is their dislike towards each other. Susima and Asoka do not see eye to eye. Unless they think of the larger interests of the Empire as its future Viceroys and adminstrators, they will exhaust their intelligence and energy in envy intrigues. This is a bad sign for the stability of the Mauryan rule.''

Bindusara (*worried*) ''I do not understand why Asoka bears malice towards his elder brother. Why not we try to make him disciplined to respect the elder ! I have already made Susima the Crown Prince. Other Princes should know to obey and to fear him.''

The discussion is cut short when a royal guard comes in and bows down.

Guard ''Your Majesty, two generals and the Chief Spy pray for an interview.''

Khallataka ''Bring them in. There may be something most urgent.''

The chief Spy and two Generals come in and bow down.

Chief Spy ''Your Majesty, these two Generals have reached the Capital this morning with a message from the Governor of Taxila that a serious revolt has broken out there.''

General ''Your Majesty, the Rebels have attacked the Mauryan officials, have killed some of them, burnt their houses, and have plundered the city.''

2nd General ''Your Majesty, a large number of Taxilan citizens have joined the Rebels. Our soldiers are fighting hard, but the situation is turning grave. The Governor prays for immediate despatch of a big force before the trouble spreads further into countrysides.''

Bindusara and Khallataka express deep surprise.

Bindusara (*sitting erect*) ''Revolt by Taxilans ! How do they dare to raise their head against the Mauryan Government !''

He looks to Khallataka.

Khallataka ''The people of Taxila are not supposed to be so dangerous. I have suspicion that there may be foreign hands behind unexpected uprising.''

Bindusara ''Foreign hands ! Who can these foreigners be ! King Antiochus has confirmed his friendship ! He is after all a relative of the Mauryas. Other Greek Kings are ruling in far-away Kingdoms ! No. I cannot suspect Antiochus !''

Khallataka ''Your Majesty, GuruDev Chanakya used to tell us that your immediate neighbouring country is for ever your enemy country, and, therefore, a King has always to suspect his neighbouring King. In case of Antiochus Soter, he is after all a Greek, and the Greeks as a race have never forgotten their humiliation in hands of our late Majesty, Emperor

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Chandragupta.''

Bindusara (*agitated*) ''If that is the likely case, I must go myself to teach a lesson both to the Taxilans and the Greeks. I have to forget that Antiochus is a relative of my House. I as Amitraghata, the Emperor of Magadh shall teach a lesson to the King of Syriya, Antiochus.''

Khallataka gives indication to the chief Spy and the Generals to withdraw.

Khallataka ''Your Majesty, in your present state of health, your march upon Taxila is not advisable. After all, it is only an intremal rebellion and not a foreign invasion. Even if it truns out to be a foreign invasion, the Mauryan Army is too strong to face it.''

Bindusara ''Who should lead this Army ? Mahamantriji, do not forget that the King is the Supreme Commander-in-Chief.''

Khallataka ''Of course, the King is the Head of the Army. But he has also his Senapati to work on his behalf as the supreme Commander. Moreover, there is already the Crown Prince of the Empire. In my opinion, the Crown Prince Susima can go to Taxila to put down the revolt. Or, any other Prince of the Mauryan House.''

Bindusara ''If the presence of a Mauryan Prince can strike terror to the hearts of the rebels and the foreigners, I may agree to send one of them. But is must be a willing son who would like to run the risk. Otherwise, I shall go there myself, no matter whether my health is good or bad. The need of the State is higher than the need of a King's person.''

Bindusara gets up in an agitated mood.

Scene 2

Palace
Emperor's Audience Hall

Bindusara, 10 Ministers,
Khallataka, Susima,
Asoka, Sugatra, Sudatta,
Subhaga, Suratha,
10 Generals

The sick Emperor is reclining on a Couch. His youthful sons are occupying throne--like chairs facing the King's couch from some distance. At the King's feet, sits Khallataka on a chair. Further behind the Princes are seated Ministers and Generals in several rows.

Khallataka ''It is a grave challenge to the Mauryan Power that the City of Taxila should rise in revolt. We have reason to suspect that the hands of the Greeks are behind the uprising. Immediate action is called for. The revolt has to be suppressed as speedily as possible.''

The Ministers and Generals stand up to say:

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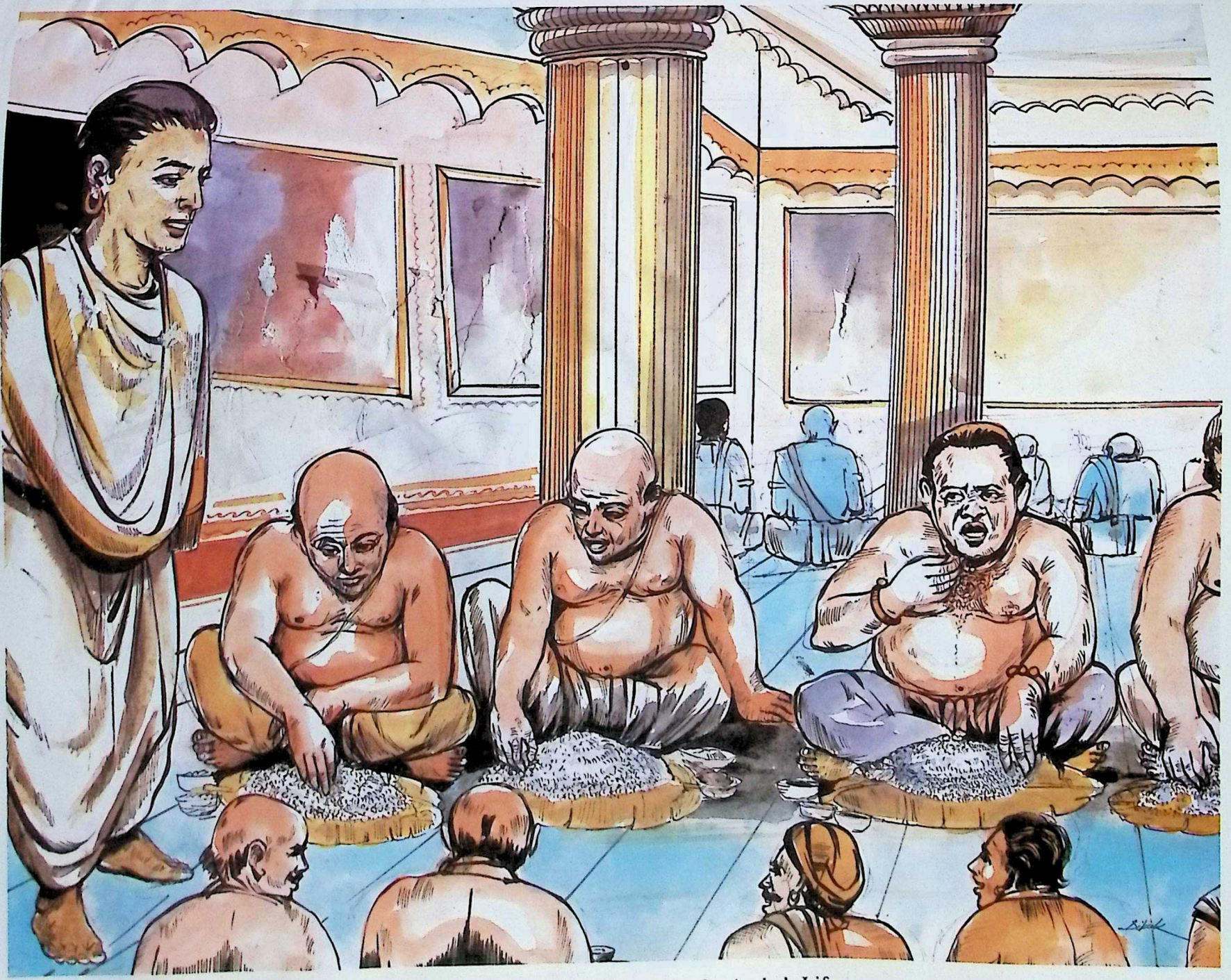

Yasas Feeding the Gluttons to Pray for Asoka's Life

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Yasas Rescuing Devi From the Cave in Susima's Hideout

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Ministers & Generals "We place our services at the disposal of the Chakravarti Sovereign."

Khallataka "His Majesty desires that he should go to Taxila himself. But we have offered our prayers to him not to go to the distant frontiers when his health is indifferent. Yet, he is determined to proceed."

Senapati "When any one of the Generals can easily crush the revolt, we pray that His Majesty gives up his decision to go."

Bindusara "I know, any one of you can break the Taxilans. But my decision to go arises from a determination to teach the external enemies a lesson that the Mauryans are not like the sleeping lions, but are in fact the roaring and bloodthirsty lions. I want to prove it to the Greeks that the spirit of my Heavenly Father is burning in me. Let the enemies, internal or external, feel the terror of my presence wherever the symptoms of trouble surface. Health or no health, Emperor Amitraghata is fully alive to his royal duties. The Mauryan Empire should ever remain unchallangeable and invincible. Whether it be a threat from the Kalingans in the South or the Syrians in the West, the Empire of Chandragupta Maurya will ever remain invoilable."

Bindusara coughs severely and puts his palm on his left chest and starts pressing it to control pain.

Khallataka "Your Majesty, the Mauryan Empire is great. The Mauryan Dynasty is the basis of that greatness. The greatness will grow from generation to generation. Your Dynasty is blessed with several heroic Princes of uncommon courage to carry the glory of the Empire further and further. Any of Your Majesty's proud sons can march to Taxila to come back with the laurels of victory. All of Your Majesty's sons are well aware of the bliss that they carry in their veins the hot blood of Chandragupta Maurya and Bindusara Amitraghata."

He looks towards the Princes. The Emperor also looks at their faces. All eyes turn upon them. For moments, there is silence. Susima sits in silence without looking towards the Emperor. Suddenly stands up Asoka. All eyes now turn towards him. The Emperor again shows pain in his chest.

Asoka "My revered Father, and my respected Prime Minister, I pray for your order to go to Taxila right now to suppress the revolt, nay, if necessary, to march against the Syrian Power. For my Father, for my Dynasty, and for my Empire, this Prince is ready to make any sacrifice."

Generals applause. Ministers express delight by uttering words of praise 'Victory be to the Noble Prince." Khallataka smiles. Susima's face turns pale.

Asoka "All I need is a powerful army, big in size. Taxila is a frontier city. Enemy kingdoms spread outside our frontiers. Let the Mauryan Power be felt far beyond our frontiers."

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Susima — "Revered Father, I can achieve the same results with a smaller force. Taxila is a small place. A rebellion does not call for a big army. If we send a bigger force for a smaller revolt, and that too to a far distance, there may be risks from other quarters. The Kalingans are ever ready to threaten our security from the South and our Capital is so near to their frontier strongholds of Gorathgiri."

Sugatra — "Respected Father, I need only one regiment to finish the Taxilans."

Khallataka — "Your Majesty, I am proud of the Princes for their readiness to go. It is for Your Majesty to take the decision as to which one of the Princes will be entrusted with the mission."

Asoka (*agitated*) — "I offered myself first, when my elder brother was sitting silent. My claim therefore may kindly be considered first. If the Crown Prince fears invasion from Kalinga, let him be here on that plea."

Bindusara (*annoyed*) — "This is no time for debate. I ordered Asoka to proceed to Taxila. Let the Senapati decide the size of the army to acccompany the Prince, keeping in view all other aspects of security."

Bindusara gets up and goes our of the Court. Ministers and Generals come near to Asoka to congratulate him. Other Princess look envious.

Susima (*to Sugatra*) — "Shameless ! A small revolt at a small town. But he claims as if the whole of the Mauryan Army. Ridiculous !"

Scene 3

Night
Queen Dharma's Room

Dharma, Asoka

Asoka comes to his mother Dharma to seek her blessings before leaving for Taxila. Dharma is offering her evening prayers with a lamp on one hand a bell in the other. When she finishes the Arati before the Image ofVishnu, Asoka takes dust from her feet.

Dharma (*in tears*) — "Asoka, I have already heard everything. My heart trembles in fear. Why did you offer yourself to go to Taxila ? Why did you repeat your desire even after Susima wanted to go ! Dear Asoka, can't you change your decision ?"

Asoka (*in stern voice*) — "Mother, did you then give brith to a worthless son ! Is your son an unworthy descedant of Chandragupta Maurya !"

Dharma (*in emotion*) — "No, not that. But your are still to young for a dangerous mission like this !"

Asoka (*laughing*) — "Young ! What did my grandfather do at my age ? Have you forgotten eveything about that great hero ! Your Asoka wants to be a

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Chandragupta. No other man is my ideal. I pray for your blessings. Bless me for victory and success.''

Dharma — ''I shall pray day and night for your safety, for your success and for your return. But, my dear, take care of your person. You have enemies. My fear is. ...''

Asoka — ''Maa, I know. I know who are working against my person. But your blessings are my protective sheield. And my sense of devotion to duty is my courage. For the Empire of my grandfather, and is serving my ailing father, I shall have no fear.''

Asoka bows down and takes dust from his Mother's feet. As he goes out, Dharma wipes tears from her eyes and turns to the Image of Vishnu with folded hands.

Scene 4

Army Headquarter — **Susima, Senapati**

Susima is meeting the Maurya Senapati in his Headquarters alone and in secrecy.

Senapati — ''Aryaputra, I am highly honoured at the visit of the Crown Prince to this humble General. I offer my homage. Is the Emperor's health perfect !''

Susima — ''The Emperor is sick. He is worried about the safety of the Empire when he is himself immobile. Reports have reached that the bloody Kalingans are raising a huge army.''

Senapati — ''Your Highness, we are aware of it. But our spies bring the news that the Kalingan Army is being shipped across the Seas to their Colonies in Survarnadwipa. They have no intention at the moment to touch the Magadhan frontiers.''

Susima — ''yet, it is the desire of the Emperor not to slacken our readiness to face dangers from that unpredictable quarters. The Taxilan Revolt is much talked of, but, it is too small an affair. We have no reports about the movement of the Syrian Armies of King Antiochus towards the east.''

Senapati — ''Your Honour, I am glad to hear it.''

Susima — ''When is Asoka leaving for Taxila ?''

Senapati — ''Early next morning. I am also accompanying him with select regiments numbering fifty thousand cavalrymen and fifty thousand infantry forces.''

Susima (*greatly annoyed*) — ''How fantastic is this number! How did you decide it ?''

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Senapati (*fearful*) "Your Honour, since the Emperor is unwell, I could not meet him. But I discussed it with the Prime Minister and he agreed."

Susima "How could you safely forget to consult the Crown Prince if you could not meet the Emperor? Is the old invalid Khallataka a soldier?"

Senapati "I am sorry, Your Honour. I shall now act as you command."

Susima "First, you should not accopany Asoka to Taxila. Secondly, only ten thousand soldiers will do, not a hundred thousand. If the Revolt melts out by itself, so far so good. If it does not, and if the foreigners attack the frontier, I as the Crown Prince shall proceed to meet the situation. It is my responsibility to defend my Empire as its future Emperor, and not of Asoka or of a Senapati. Is it now clear to you? Let Asoka first go with a small force to assess the nature of the Revolt."

Senapati "Your Highness, I shall act as you command. To me as a soldier, the orders of the Crown Prince are like the orders of the Emperor."

Scene 5

Highway **Asoka, 2 Generals, Army on Horseback**

On the long highway, Asoka is leading his troops towards Taxila through forests and deserts. He is riding fast, accompanied by two Generals on horseback. A cavalry force is seen behind at a distance. A storm of dust is seen on the sky as the cavalry force passes by.

Ist General "Aryaputra, had you been pleased to demand, the Emperor would have been glad to despatch a much bigger force with us. But as it is now, our forces are too small."

2nd General "Your Highness, on our way through Indraprastha, we can ask from the Governor to lend us some his rgiments in order to enlarge our force."

Asoka (*looking grim*) "No, never. We have to prove our worth as warriors with whatever force is with us. Victory depends on stategy. A large Army is not necessarily a key to victory."

Asoka looks serious. He talks to himself, even if within the reach of the ears of the Generals riding by his side.

Asoka "They want me to perish in Taxila. Or, to come back as a defeated Prince, a defeated soldier and a disgraced Mauryan. No, Asoka shall not die in Taxila where his grandfather built his great career. No, he shall not suffer a defeat there where the foundations of the Mauryan Empire were laid. Asoka shall not be disgraced at a place where the spirit of Chanakya and Chandragupta still prevails."

Asoka turns towards the Generals on either side and talks to them.

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Asoka — "At this moment of crisis, Taxila appears to my heart as the dearest of all places of Bharat. I feel as if Chandragupta Maurya's heavenly Soul is calling us from Taxila. I feel, as if, the sacred and immortal soul of Mahamati Chanakya is still there on the sky of Taxila to inspire us to action. My brave Generals, let us go with the utmost courage and confidence to win the Battle of Taxila. Let Victory be ours!"

A General — "Aryaputra, with you as our lord and leader, there can be no defeat for us. We are ready to fight and die fo you, to swim and sink with you."

The scenes of the march of the cavary forces follow.

Scene 6

Night
Hill Top

Asoka, Generals, Spies

In the darkness of night, under faint moonlight, Asoka and his Generals and captains are duscussing the strategy of military operation. Mauryan spies of Taxila are present. The meeting is taking place on a hill top outside Taxila.

Asoka — "A part of the troops should be put in disguise as merchants. Some of them should operate as Syrian traders and agents."

He turns to spies.

Asoka — "Before daybreak, you should take the disguised soldiers to all the suspected hideouts of the rebels. Carry gold and silver pieces and distribute among the suspected ring leaders as money from the Syrians. Ask them to gather at the city centre in the dead of the night to collect more gold for their further revolt."

A spy from the Mauryan Governor of Taxial reaches the place and presents his identity token.

Spy — "Aryaputra, the Governor has retreated to dense forests and his hiding with his forces for several days. He seeks order from Your Highness."

Asoka — "The Governor should come out with his forces towards the Governor's Palace which is now under the control of the Rebels with white flags of surrender after the sunset. He would offer himself and his men as prisoners before the leaders of the rebels. He should go on discussing the terms of surrender till we rech the Palce to take the rebels by surprise. The Governors soldiers would then join us in fighting the rebels."

Asoka instructs in whispers to his Generals and spies.

Scene 7

Night. City Centre

Ashok's Army, Rebels

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It is a scene of surprise attack on hideouts of rebels. Scenes of attacks will follow on Governor's Palace where Rebel Leaders gather to receive the surrender of the Governor's soldiers. Scenes of ruthless killings of the foreigners and rebels will follow in succession.

Scene 8

City Centre
Vast Open Ground

Mauryan Soldiers, Rebels,
Taxilan Citizens

The Mauryan soldiers drag to the field hundreds of rebels in chains. Among them are seen foreigners and Rebel Leaders. They are made to kneel down row after row in an open ground in the centre of the city. Behind the chained prisoners are made to sit down crowds of Taxilan people including their elders. Soldiers guard all around the ground with axes and swords in hand. Archers are seen from lofty platforms in all corners with arrows pointed at the crowds. Severed and bleeding heads of the Rebel Leaders are seen fixed to high poles all around the vast ground.

Scene 9

At a Distance

Asoka, Generals

From a distance are racing up five chariots, carrying Mauryan Officials, the Governor and Army Generals. The chariots halt before the crowds on either side of a central place earmarked for Asoka's chariot.

Soon comes a big ornamented chariot drawn by four horses and it halts at the reserved place. Asoka stands up from his seat and looks all around with sharp piercing eyes. He looks grim, serious and angry.

The Rebels and the crowds shout in unison: :Glory to Aryaputra Asoka Vardhan'' ''Glory to Chakravarti Samrat Bindusara Amitraghat'' ''Glory to the great Empire of the Mauryas.''

Scene 10

Same Place

Same Characters

Mauryan Generals from their chariots raise hands indicating to the crowd to keep quiet. Pin drop silence at once dominates the place. People bow down their heads in fear. Asoka begins to address in stern voice.

Asoka

"I stand here on behalf of His Imperial Majesty, Samrat Bindusara Amitraghata, the Chakravarti Monarch of *Bharatavarsha*, first to pronounce my judgement on the Rebels and Traitors who dared to disturb

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the peace and tranquillity of the Mauryan Empire at this distant frontiers by raising a revolt. For these people there is no mercy, no pity, no kindness. I order my soldiers to take these prisoners to the field of execution.''

Prisoners — ''Your Gracious Aryaputra, the great victor of Taxila, we pray for mercy. Give us mercy by forgiving our mistakes. Be kind enough to spare our lives.''

They place their heads of the ground.

Asoka (*in stern voice*) — ''There is nothing as `Mercy' in the Mauryan polity for those who raise their hands against the Rashtra. They have to pay the price with their heads. That is my verdict under the Mauryan Law.''

Asoka waves his hand. The soldiers drag out the chained rebels row after row in quick action. The prisoners raise loud cries and appeals for pity and mercy. As the front part of the ground is clear, Asoka's chariot advances to the front of the terrified crowds of citizens. In front rows are seen the elder citizens of Taxila -- old, bearded, and with ripe heads. They bow their heads to ground for three times and look at Asoka in their front.

Chief of the Elders — ''Noble Aryaputra, we pray for forgiveness. We are innocent. We are ever loyal to our great Emperor, ever loyal to the Mauryan rule. We beg for forgiveness.''

An Old Taxilan — ''Oh Great Dispenser of Justice ! Let my head roll on earth here and now. But let me die with Truth on my lips. We the Taxilans never thought ill of our August Majesty, the Emperor, or of his Great Dynasty. We had deep resentment only against the wicked Official, the Dusta Amatyas, who governed us without justice, oppressed us without consideration, and exploited us without feelings. You, Aryaputra, are the dispenser of justice at this hour of your triumph. The Rebels will die as they deserve death. But, unless the root cause of the rebellion is eradicated, who can guarantee the peace in future.''

Asoka — ''You old brave friend ! I admire your courage if you speak the Truth. I shall enquire to know who are these Dusta Amatyas who oppressed and exploited you. They too should receive from my hand the treatment they deserve.''

Crowds — ''Glory to our Saviour. Glory to Aryaputra Asoka. Glory to our great Emperor.''

Asoka — ''Dear Citizens of Taxila ! Let me now tell you how dear is Taxila to the heart of every Mauryan. It is at this place that Gurudev Chanakya lived and taught. It is at this place that my grandfather, who is now in Heaven, spent his youth, turned into a hero, and rose to greatness. It is at Taxila that the wise sage of Holy Bharat, Gurudev Chanakya and his disciple the bravest of the brave Chandragupta thought of the unity of the whole

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of Bharatavarsha and took up the mission of uniting the great landmass between the Himalayas and the Seas. It is from Taxila that Chandragupta fought against the Greeks to liberate the north-west. It is from here that began his mighty conquering career. To us, the Mauryans, your dear soil of Taxila is sacred and the dearest. Your City is in our blood and mind. We love Taxila and love the Taxilans from the core of our heart.''

People cheer and rejoice. They shout ''Glory to Aryaputra Asoka, Glory to the Mauryan Dynasty.'' Asoka raises his voice to say.

Asoka

''Yes, the Mauryans love you. But, you Taxilans, you became disloyal to a Dynasty which liberated you from the foreigners, who made you a part of the great Bharatiya humanity, who paid to you their utmost attention, and who made you prosperous by giving you all protection in trade and commerce, who gave you freedom to go to the farthest corners the Western hemisphere. You forgot the benefits and fell victime to wicked designs of dangerous traitors ! Remember, therefore, that the Mauryans are good with the good people, but they are also ruthless towards people who work against their Empire. Bharat is greater than any place of India, be it Taxila or Kandahar, be it Indraprastha or Ujjayini, be it Kosala of Kasi. For the sake of sacred *Bharatavarsha*, the Mauryans will live and die. No revolt, no invasion, no internal turmoil, no external threat will go unfaced or unpunished. Remember also, that the Mauryan Power is the mightiest on earth. All foreign kings together will not match the might of the Mauryas.''

''So, my beloved people of Taxila, be the worthy citizens of a great country, and behave as the loyal subjects of a great Emperor. I wish you peace and prosperity.''

People shout continuous cheers. ''Long live our Glorious Prince. Long live our Glorious Emperor. May Heaven smile on Aryaputra Asoka. May Heaven shower blessings on the Mauryans.''

Asoka's chariot turns back.

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Episode Eight

Commentary

The suppression of the Taxilan revolt proved Asoka's worth as a daring warrior. This also caused envy in the mind of the Crown Prince Susima. Court intrigues began to remove Asoka from the Capital. The Emperor appointed him as the Viceroy of Avanti to be stationed in the City of Ujjayini.

Scene 1

Night: Susima's Apartment Interior

Susima, Sugatra, Sudatta, Dancing Girls, Female Spy

It is night. Inside his luxurious pleasure apartment, Prince Susima with two of his brothers is enjoying dance and music, presented by 3 beautiful girls. They are enjoying drinks, while observing the performance.

Susima — "Is my brave brother alive or dead in Taxila ? Has he been burnt or buried alive by the Rebels ?"

Sudatta — "Or, has he been taken a prisoner along with his band of brave soldiers ?"

Sugatra — "Or, has he taken his own life to escape shame and humiliation ?"

Susima — "We are expecting good news any moment from now. Our spies have come back."

The Princes go on drinking till they are drowned in intoxication. Dance performance goes on. A Female Spy enters and bows down. The dancers go out quietly as they see the Spy.

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Susima "Come on dear girl ! We are waiting for you with rewards. Tell us about the fate of our foolish dear brother."

The Spy shows sorrowful face. She is nervous to speak.

Spy "Aryaputra, Messengers have reached the Prime Minister with information that Prince Asoka has fully crushed the Taxilan Revolution. He has proclaimed his victory by celebrating the occasion. The Rebels have been killed mercilessly and complete peace has been restored."

Before she completes her statement, Susima gets up in fury and slaps her in face.

Susima "You stupid woman ! Is this the good news I asked you to bring ? Is there nothing to delight us from the reports you have heard ? Is there no report about his physical injury or the number of heavy casualties on our side, or, about the continuance of the revolt ?"

Spy (*in fear*) "My Lord, my duty is to carry truthful reports to you. There is no information about Asoka's failure or miseries. The Prime Minister has received details of reports about the grand success of Prince Asoka. He has already gone to the Emperor to report about the victory."

Susima (*loud voice*) "Anything more !"

Spy "The Prime Minister has also ordered for the despatch of a strong Army contingent to Taxila."

Sudatta "What for ?"

Spy "For restoration of complete peace and order as well as to cause terror in the mind of external enemies whose hands were behind the Revolt."

Susima (*in raging anger*) "This old haggard of a Prime Minister is going out of bounds to prop up that Prince. He is taking full advantage of our Father's illness. He does not care to consult me !"

Sugatra "Brother, I hate this Khallataka for his indifference towards us. He seems to be clearly a man of Asoka. If he does not respect the Crown Prince, who else is in his mind for the adoration as the future Emperor !"

Susima "I shall teach him a good lesson before he proceeds further."

They drink from their cups.

Scene 2

Khallataka's Room **Khallataka, Susima**

Pretending innocence and ignorance that he does not know about the suppression of the Taxilan revolt, Susima meets the Prime Minister in his official chamber. Khallataka is in a

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happy mood. He gets up and greets the Crown Prince.

Khallataka — "Yuvaraj, I welcome you with great good pleasure at this moment of joy for every man and woman of Magadh. We have won the victory. Kumar Asoka has completely crushed the Revolt which was indeed of a serious nature. The Emperor has received the news with utmost joy. A large number of Greek agents have been massacred. The young Prince has shown no mercy to the conspirators and rebels. As he reports, his cruelty will serve a drastic lesson to all. I think, as also the Emperor feels, King Antiochus must have realised that the Mauryans are mighty enough to root out any trouble from their vast domain."

Susima (*looking serious*) — "In my opinion, the threat from outside is not over. The snake of Syria has been injured, but not killed. Asoka, therefore, should stay there for a longer period to keep an eye on the Greeks. His presence in Taxila will remind the foreign enemies that the Mauryans know to guard their distant frontiers with care and determination. You may, therefore, send on express message to the Prince to stay on in Taxila for a year at least."

Khallataka — "But Asoka is already on his way back from Taxila. His emmissaries informed me about his return march. The Prince also aksed for fresh regiments to be positioned on frontier lines of Taxila and I have passed the order accordingly."

Susima (*agitated*) — "The timid fellow is coming back himself while asking for more soldiers ! And, you passed your order to satisfy him without a second thought ! Did you consult the Emperor about this contradictory approach of Asoka ?"

Khallataka — "Your Honour is well aware of the fact that the Emperor is unwell and has anthorised me to deal with the Taxilan affairs as effectively as possible !"

Susima (*annoyed*) — "Did you consult me on this issue ? If my Father the Emperor is unwell, I am his eldest son and the Crown Prince and I am certainly not unwell !"

Khallataka — "I am sorry if I did not think it necessary to consult the Crown Prince in my capacity as the Prime Minister."

Susima — "Now that we are in consultation, I would ask you to reverse your order. Do not despatch fresh regiments to Taxila. At the same time, send an express order to Asoka, wherever he may be on his homeward journey, to go back to Taxila and stay there until further order."

Khallataka — "The Emperor has already ordered me to arrange for his grand reception when he enters the Capital as a victorious General. How can I go against the Emperor's will and issue fresh orders without consulting him !"

Susima (*in anger*) — "I see your game. You are behaving as if you are the Emperor and your

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puppet Asoka is the Heir Apparent ! Reverse your order at once, or, I go to the Emperor.''

Khalltaka — ''Noble Prince, on Heaven's sake kindly do not disturb the Emperor's mind on this small issue. He has already decided to honour Prince Asoka for his victory, and to strengthen the frontiers with stronger forces at Taxila. Your proposal may indeed cause worry in his mind, especially when Asoka is on his way back. The Prince was sent to suppress the Revolt and he has done it. While being sent to Taxila, he was not ordered to stay there beyond the required time. Moreover, people in Pataliputra will feel doubtful about our victory if the Prince stays there longer.''

Susima — ''Prime Minister ! I now understand that you are the Patron of the Mauryas and their Empire. I am told that people at times outgrow their size. A prime minister may think he is the King. I hope, such thoughts have not touched your mind !''

Khallataka — ''Yuvaraj ! A Prime Minister does not become a king. He only serves the King and through the King, he serves the kingdom and its people. If in serving the best interests of the people and the State, a Prime Minister behaves like a King, it is for the King to tolerate it or not. I have nothing to say as regard my size. It is for the Emperor to say, not for one who has not appointed me to the office of the Prime Minister !''

Susima — ''It means, the Crown Prince has no place in your polity ! It means, the Empire of the Mauryas belongs to the Emperor and the Prime Minister, and when the Emperor is sick, it belongs only to the Prime Minister !''

Khallatak (*agitated*) — ''Yes, Yuvraj, Yes. As long as the Prime Minister serves the cause of the Empire and not of his own, he may safely feel that the Empire belongs to him as much as it belongs to the Emperor. Country is greater than self. A Khallataka has no interest of his own. His only consideration is the interest of the Empire !''

Susima (*in rage*) — ''Mahamantri, Are you sure of what you say ! Are you not a partisan in your thought ? Are you not showing favour to Asoka ? Are you not taking decisions to elevate him to Himalayan heights ! Do you think that all other Princes are fools not to understand your game ?''

Susima goes out angry and excited.

Khallataka (*to himself*) — *''Oh God ! How intoxicating is the ambition for the Throne ! How much envious one can become of others on suspicion as a rival ! What will happen to the Mauryan House if hatred, malice and anger turn into virtues of the Princes !''*

Scene 3

Streets of Pataliputra — **Asoka and His Generals on Horseback, Crowds of People**

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Episode Eight

Crowds of people are standing on either side of the main Streets of Pataliputra. Asoka with his Generals, followed by soldiers, all on horseback, are advancing slowly towards the main gate of the Palace. Flowers are thrown at them. they Crowd shouts:

"Hail Aryaputra Asoka, the Victor of Taxila." Asoka raises his hands towards the people in acknowledging their greetings.

At the Gate, the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers receive the Prince as he gets down from the horse. The people cheers.

Scene 4

Court

Bindusara, Khallataka, Courtiers, Asoka, Susima, Other Princes

As customary, Asoka is being received and honoured in the open Court on his return from Taxila after suppressing the revolt. The Emperor is seated on the Throne. Beside him is seated the Prime Minister. Down the platform, are seated other Princes, Ministers and Courtiers, facing the Throne. A herald announces the entry of Prince Asoka.

Herald — "Aryaputra Prince Asoka is coming to present himself before the August Imperial Majesty Chakravarti Monarch of Bharat, the great and glorious Samrat Bindusara Amitraghata."

Asoka enters the Court and advances in quick steps and halts before the platform at its base. He bows down before the Emperor. Khallataka stands up.

Khallataka — "I am commanded by His August majesty to announce it to the Court that Aryaputra Kumar Asoka has returned from Taxila after suppressing a widespread revolt in that frontier city of the Mauryan Empire. Foreign hands were there behind the revolt and sinister motives were there to destabilise the Mauryan authority. It is by his uncommon courage, his undaunted valour and his determined efforts that Prince Asoka exstinguished the fire of revolt and taught the bitterest lessons to both the internal and external foes of the Empire. His Majesty is pleased to receive the victorious Prince with profound joy and warmth of heart. I call upon the victorious Prince to come up to the presence of the Emperor."

Asoka climbs up the steps to reach the Throne. Bindusara stand up to bless him as Asoka bows down. The Emperor takes out a necklace of precious diamonds from his neck and puts it on the neck of Asoka. The Courtiers cheer with loud ovation and clapping for a prolonged time.

The faces of Susima, Sudatta and Sugatra express disgust. They are seen talking in whispers. Ovation goes on.

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Susima (*in whisper*) "This old villain Khallataka is making a mountain of an ant-hill."

Sudatta "By speading disinformation through his agents Asoka has blown up the character of the Revolt to sky height. The bubble has to burst."

Asoka comes down looking proud. The Courtiers raise their hands to salute him. The Emperor leaves the Throne and the Courtiers disperse.

Scene 5

Evening: Palace Garden **Susima, Sudatta, Sugatra, Saugata, Asoka**

Prince Susima with his three brothers is in a joyous mood while walking in the garden. Susima's eyes fall on Asoka who is walking at a distance. He walks near to Asoka with his other brothers.

Susima "My dear brave brother ! Do you know what the Shatras say. The say, Pride cometh before Ruin."

Asoka (*annoyed*) "Yes, I know it. I also know it that legitimate pride in a great success is like an inspiration for greater successes."

Susima (*sarcastically*) "So, you think that the suppression of a small uprising of a few traders is a mighty achievement ! I would advise you therefore to outgrow your size by a hundred times by feeling more and more of pride."

Sudatta (*smiling*) "Brother, what will happen to poor Asoka if like a frog he blows up his body to look like an elephant ?"

Sugatra "Poor Asoka will of course burst like a poor frog."

Others laugh aloud.

Asoka "My answer to this is — Pride is not a disease. The real disease is Envy. A frog may burst while trying to outgrow its size. But, an elephant that fears a lion is worse than a frog. I went to Taxila when my brave brother lost his nerve to go like an elephant to face the lion of Revolt ! Do you now understand who is worse than a frog, Asoka or Susima !"

Sudatta (*angry*) "Do you dare say so to insult our elder brother, the Crown Prince !"

Asoka "Yes, I shall dare it again and again if the elder brother deserves it. You may fear the Crown Prince and flatter him. Asoka does not knowhow to fear."

Asoka walks away in quick steps. Others look on and turn to discuss things in whispers.

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Episode Eight

Scene 6

A Flash Scene of a meeting between the Royal Astrologer and the Princes Sudatta and Sugatra inside a ruined Temple outside Pataliputra.

Scene 7

Bindusara's Apartment **Bindusara, Astrologer**

Emperor Bindusara is in consultation with the Royal Astrologer. He is eager to know about his health and other conditions of his earthly existence from the learned Brahmin. The Astrologer is sitting on the ground and making a study of the Emperor's horoscope in rapt attention.

Astrologer — "Your Majesty, the Stars which caused your physical ailments have now moved away from their ominous positions. Good Stars have replaced the bad Stars and the horoscope shows an excellent time for Your Majesty's health and prosperity."

Having said this, the Astrologer nonetheless looks sad and thoughtful making gestures as if he wants to hide certain things. Bindusara observes his face while the Astrologer is still studying the horoscope.

Bindusara — "If the Stars are favourable, why then do you look worried ! Are there other evil stars to counteract the good stars !"

Astrologer — "Your Majesty ! It is my humble duty and also sacred responsibility to caution against what the horoscope indicates as possible omens. The Emperor is the Lord of the Earth. He has many more fears to his body which ordinary mortals do not have. Health is one thing. Life is a greater thing. And, a King's life is the most precious, demanding utmost caution and care to guard it.'

Bindusara (*anxious*) — "Do you apprehend evil designs on my life arising out of evil influences of bad Stars ! Do you find signs of dangers in battles or expeditions or from enemies ?"

Astrologer — "Stars do not show fears from external sources."

He pauses and keeps quiet.

Bindusara — "What do you mean thereby ! Are there then internal agencies to harm my person ?"

Astrologer (*fearful*) — "I cannot hide the truth from my Lord, the Emperor. It will be a Sin for which I have to suffer in Hell. The horoscope indicates danger signals from one of your own offsprings !"

Bindusara (*stunned*) — "What ! Danger from one of my own offsprings ? Is it ever possible ?

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Has it ever happened on earth ?''

Astrologer — ''Your Majesty ! That is the tragedy of Kingship. A King's enemies are not necessarily outsiders, but at times his own kith and kin. Throne allures brother to kill brother, son to kill father, and examples abound. Everybody knows about the story of the eternal shame Magadh suffers from. King Ajatasatru of Magadh was responsible for the death of his father King Bimbisara. It is the lust for the Throne which drove Ajatasatru to that shameful act. He himself confessed before the Buddha saying ''Oh Tathagata, Sin overcame me, weak and foolish and wrong that I am, in that for the sake of sovereignty I put to death my father, that righteous man, that righteous King.'' Yes, Your Majesty, in this very realm of Magadh, King Ajatasatru became an instrument in the death of his own noble father, King Bimbisara of the Haryankakula Saisunaga Dynasty.''

Bindusara (*sad*) — ''Bimbisara and Bindusara spell alike. Do the Stars therefore reserve for Bindusara the fate of a Bimbisara ?''

Astrologer — ''My Lord, let this be only between you and me. I shall try to propitiate the evil Stars by the necessary rituals. Your Majesty must keep it absolutely secret and only to himself for the sake of the kingdom and the people.''

Astrologer goes out. Bindusara looks serious and thoughtful.

Bindusara (*to himself*) — ''Which of my many sons can be that vile and that sinful to act against his father's holy person ! It is only Dharma's son — none else, none.''

Scene 8

Night: Bindusara's Bedroom — **Bindusara, Susima, Susima's Mother**

Bindusara thinks of Prince Susima as his dearest and wants to establish his position as his main prop. The Emperor is reclining on his bed. Susima's mother is burning incense near her husband's bed. Susima is seated on a chair.

Bindusara (*smiling*) — ''Susima, you are not twenty-two in age. You are the Crown Prince. The subjects of my Empire would like to see the continuity of the Mauryan Dynasty. I am thinking of your marriage so that the Dynasty of Chandragupta finds a descendant.''

Queen — ''Aryaputra, from which of the Royal Families of Bharat can you find a bride for your Crown Prince ? No Royal House is equal to the House of the Mauryas ! Are you thinking of a Greek Royal Family like the House of the Selucids ?''

Bindusara (*smiling*) — ''Did you yourself come from any royal family ? Did Queen Dharma come from a royal house ?''

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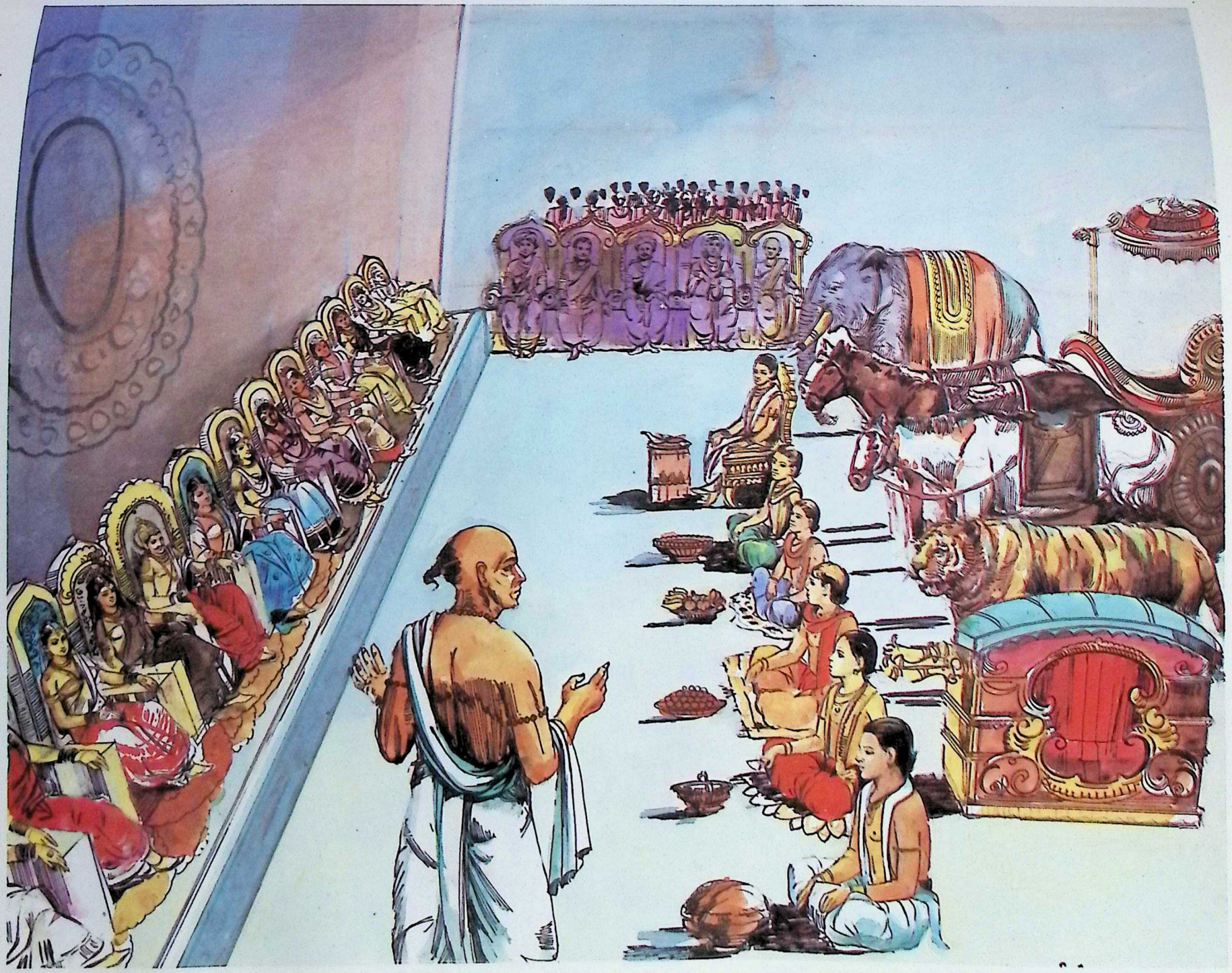

Chanakya Conducts Intelligence Test of Bindusara's Sons

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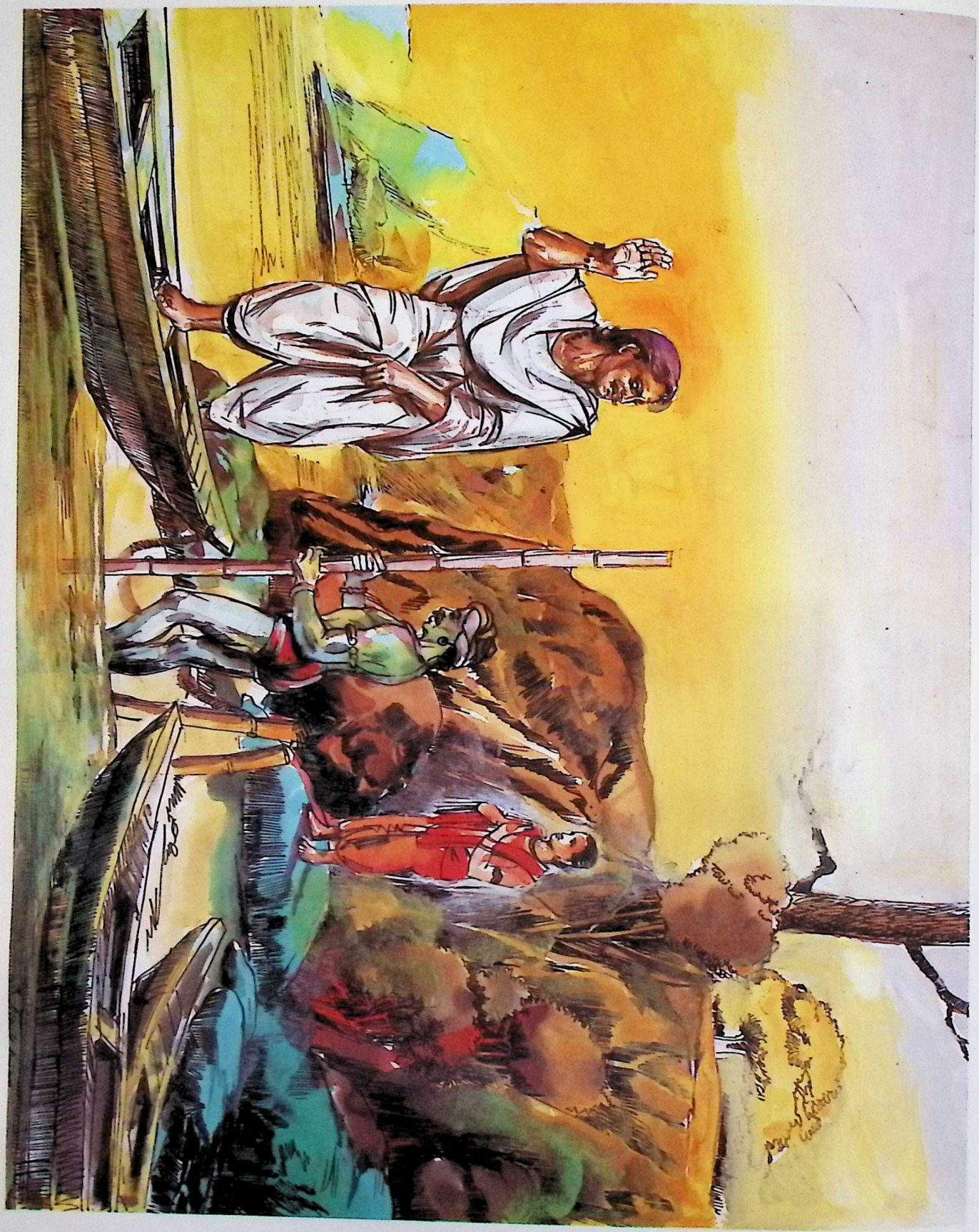

Boy Asoka Bids Farewell to His Grandfather Chandragupta

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Asoka Before the Taxilan Prisoners

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Scene of Taxilan Revolt

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Susima — "Pitaji, if the marriage of the Crown Prince is necessary for the sake of the Empire. I beseech you to leave it to me to find my bride."

Bindusara (*frowning*) — "Let me first do my duty. I shall send my Chief Priest and Royal Emissaries to the Court of the King of Kalinga with the proposal for a matrimonial alliance. The Kalinga Royal Family is equal in status to the Mauryan Family. Their kingdom is vast. They have colonies outside Bharat. Moreover, by a matrimonial tie, I can overcome the perpetual hostility of that neighbouring country towards Magadh."

Scene 9

Toshali Palace
King's Audience Hall

King of Kalinga,
2 Kalinga Ministers, 3 Kalinga Priests, 5 Magadhan Priests & Emissaries

The Palace of the King of Kalinga is situated inside the Fortress of Toshali. Outside the Fort are seen hundreds of huge elephants and hundreds of royal guards. The 5 Magadhan Priests and Emissaries are taken inside. The King of Kalinga is sitting on a Throne of gold, studded with diamonds. He is old but maintains a strong martial body with beards and impressive moustache. Near him are seated 2 of his Ministers and 3 of his Priests. 5 Magadhans are seated on chairs facing the King. Both sides are in discussion about the marriage proposal.

Magadhan Priest — "Mahamanya Kalingadhipati, Our Gracious Majesty Emperor Bindusara Amitraghata presents to Your August Majesty his cordial wishes for the prosperity of your great land and of your people. He also offers a proposal for a matrimonial relation between the two royal families of Kalinga and Magadha. Our Crown Prince is now aged 22. Emperor Amitraghata will feel deeply happy if Your Majesty may feel willing to offer a Bride of the Kalinga Royal Family to our Crown Prince."

The King looks towards the Kalinga Chief Priest.

King (*to Magadhans*) — "My Priests have thought over the matter. The Chief Priest will explain his point to you."

The King abruptly gets up and goes out of the apartment. The Kalinga Chief Priest talks to the Magadhana.

Kalinga Priest — "You are our honoured guests from Magadh. It is not our slightest intention to offend our guests. But, this is, as you know, a matter of religious significance as every marriage is. We as Priests first take into account the pedigree of the two houses which want to unite through sacred marriage. The Royal House of Kalinga is most ancient, whereas, the Royal House of Magadh is most recent in origin. In the South, Your Emperor's father is described as `The Vamba Moriyar', that is, An Upstart. On consideration of this derogatory term in respect of the Founder of the Maurya Family prevailing in the belief of the lands to the south of the Vindhyas, we have advised our King not to agree to offer a daughter

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of the Kalinga Royal House to the Grandson of an Upstart Monarch. You may please convey these priestly views to Your King.''

The Emissaries of Magadh get up in dramatic suddeness, feeling offended and insulted.

Scene 10

Evening : Bank of Ganga **Susima (Aged 22), Sumana (Aged 20)**

On the bank of river Ganga are seen Prince Susima and his lady-love Sumana, sitting on a rock and looking to the glittering water of the river under the light of a rising moon.

Susima ''Dear Sumana, Heaven has ordianed our love and marriage. Going against my desire, Father wanted to get me married from the Royal House of Kalinga. But, God has saved us from that evil fate. Had the Kalingans agreed, I do not know what might have happened to me !''

Sumana (*looking lovingly*) ''Nothing would have happened to you. But, to me, it could be different. Mother Ganga would have received me to her body.''

She reclines on Susima's chest. Dark clouds are seen on the horizon, and a storm soon breaks out on the river.

Scene 11

Flash Scene of the marriage between Susima and Sumana. Emperor Bindusara blesses the couple. Royal rejoicing, dance and music follow.

Scene 12

Evening: Palace Garden **Susima, Sumana, Young Girls, Khallataka**

The twilight after the sunset has come in. The Palace Garden resounds with mirthful laughter of a number of beautiful girls who are playing around the fountains the game of hide and seek. Prince Susima with his wife Sumana is enjoying the amoral games of the charming ladies who are running in different directions to catch each other, some of them being blind-folded.

The old Prime Minister Khallataka is hastening towards the apartment of the Emperor on an urgent summon from him. In order to avoid the gaze of the beauties, he puts a white apron on his head, and walks in quick steps through the garden on a shortcut route to the Palace. As he walks briskly in twilight, two blind-folded girls dash against his body and the old Prime Minister falls on ground heavily. The girls, without knowing who he is, laugh aloud and surround his person.

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When Khallataka gets up from the ground and tries to cover up his head and face to escape shame, Susima takes out two heavy gloves from his hands and throws the gloves straight at the face of Khallataka which hit him badly. Susima walks towards him whose face is still hidden.

Susima — "You shameless creature, have you no shame in you ? Is it decent to walk through the young beauties with a face covered ? Who the devil are you ?"

Susima pulls out the cover from Khallataka's face and looks at him in anger.

Khallataka — "Yuvaraj, His Majesty wants to see me immediately and I am taking this shortest route to reach his apartment. I am sorry to have disturbed the game of the girls."

Susima — "Shortest route ! Can you take a shortest route even through the ladies' apartments or the maids' rooms ? When would you learn decency ? I could have taught it to you had you not been the Prime Minister ! And, perhaps it is too late for you at this age to learn anything !"

Khallataka — "Yes, I am too old to learn anything. It is a misfortune to be old, and a greater misfortune to continue in office while getting older everyday." Some Girls laugh.

Susima — "These pretty ones would like to see you to take to *Sannyasa* which our religion prescribes for men of your age !"

Khallataka — "I take your advice, and thank you for reminding me of the value of Sannyasa."

Khallataka walks away in quick steps. The girls continue to play in darkness.

Scene 13

Night: Bindusara's Apartment **Bindusara, Khallataka**

The Old Khallataka enters into the room of Bindusara looking sad and agitated. His eyes are dull. His face is swollen and red. Bindusara looks at him with surprise.

Bindusara — "You look different ! What has happened ?"

Khallataka (*taking seat*) "I was coming to you on a wrong path. The Crown Prince showed me the correct path to walk in this age of my life."

Bindusara — "Did Susima offend you ?"

Khallataka — "It will be improper on my part to complain against the Crown Prince. At the same time, Your Majesty, it is my humble duty as your Prime Minister to advise you to restrain the Crown Prince from behaving in a

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way unbecoming of the eldest son of the ruling monarch and a future king !''

Bindusara (*looking grave*) ''Would you not remember his age, Prime Minister ! A youth has his hot blood. Also his momentary mood !'

Khallataka ''Yes, I understand the weakness of the youth. At the same time, I might say that if virtues lack in one's youth, it is likely to lack in coming years too. Degeneration or regeneration of a person begins in his youthful age.''

Bindusara ''I summoned you to discuss about the appointment of a Viceroy for the region of Avanti to be stationed at Ujjayini. But, we may discuss it later. You are in some emotion, it seems.''

Khallataka ''No, An old man has no emotion, only his cool judgement. I may propose that Prince Susima be appointed as the Viceroy of Avanti to learn administration and gain experience for future responsibilities.''

Bindusara looks at Khallataka with eyes of suspicion.

Bindusara ''The Crown Prince can learn the arts of governance here in the Capital under my supervision and under the influence of all my Ministers. To send him away to Ujjayini may not serve the desired purpose.'

Khallataka remains silent.

Bindusara ''I have thought of sending Asoka to Ujjayini in recognition of his success in Taxila. Let him become a Viceroy to feel satisfied and happy that his abilities are well appreciated.''

Khallataka ''Whatever Your Majesty thinks correct will be surely to the best interest of the Empire.''

Bindusara pulls a string and a Guard comes in.

Bindusara ''Did you inform Asoka that I want too see him ?''

Guard ''The Prince is waiting outside.''

Bindusara ''Bring him in.''

Guard goes out and Asoka enters.

Bindusara ''Dear Son, you did a great good job in Taxila. I feel happy that you volunteered to go there when I was unable to go because of sickness. Would you be now prepared to shoulder a higher responsibility ?''

Asoka ''I am ready to give the last drop of blood in serving my father. Whatever you command, I am ready to obey.''

Bindusara ''Excellent my son, excellent. I have decided to appoint you as the Viceroy of the vast region of Avanti. Its Capital is Ujjayini which is one of the most beautiful places in our whole country. Would you not like to accept the appointment ?''

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Asoka "Pujya Pitaji, I shall deem it a great honour to go to Ujjayini as the Viceroy of Avanti. I seek your blessings to shoulder the grave responsibility with courage and confidence."

Bindusara "Brave you are, brave indeed ! My blessings and best wishes are with you. You may leave for your new place on any auspicious day at the earliest."

Asoka bows down and takes leave. Khallataka looks thoughtful.

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Episode Nine

Commentary

Asoka's appointment as the Viceroy of Avanti caused much worry to Susima and his brothers. They wanted to eliminate him before he reached Ujjayini. On his way to that city, Asoka sojourned for some time near Vidisa where he fell in low with a Buddhist girl named Devi Sakya Kumari.

Scene 1

Night: Susima's Apartment **Susima, Sudatta, Sugatra**

Susima, Sudatta and Sugatra are in discussion regarding their course of action against Asoka after he was appointed as the Viceroy of Avanti.

Susima "It is difficult to understand the mind of the Emperor in appointing Asoka as the Viceroy of Avanti. He could have asked me to go there or could have offered that high office to any one of you !"

Sudatta "No, our revered Father has done the most correct thing. It is the Astrologer's magic that has worked. The Emperor wants to keep Asoka far away from the palace and the Capital."

Sugatra "But it will go in favour of Asoka. The office or Viceroy means much. He will try to enhance his power there. Elder Brother Susima could have gone there to consolidate his power as a Viceroy !"

Susima "As I know, Father wants my presence in the Capital. And, as the Crown Prince, I shall certainly enjoy much greater power than that of a Viceroy."

Sugatra "That may be correct. But, we have also to realise what mischief Asoka

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is capable of. He will increase the size of his army. He will acquire and accumulate enough of wealth. With men and money, he will turn too ambitious to create problems for all of us. Let us always be aware of his envy towards us.''

Susima looks grave. His face expresses evil thoughts.

Susima — ''Are we that incapable to pluck out this thorn from our flesh ? We know the character of this bloody Prince. Who knows, he may even proclaim himself as an independent King of Avanti. For devils nothing appears as impossible. For Asoka, everything may seem possible. He has no respect for our Father, no fear for the Emperor, and he does not know how to respect us as his brothers !''

Sugatra — ''Is it not advisable that you disclose these apprehensions to the Emperor ?''

Susima — ''Father may think that I am envious of Asoka. He may also feel disturbed that what I say may turn true.''

Susima suddenly rises up in a violent temper.

Susima — ''Should we allow this poisonous snake to gather more venom to bite us all ? Are we that helpless to see our enemy grow ? Or, should we try to finish him before he is ready to finish us ?''

Sudatta — ''Brother, kindly be calm. The snake is a snake, and it needs only one treatment it deserves. Father apprehends that it may bite him. We apprehend that it may bite us. Why not then we despatch to hell before it actually raises its hood ?''

Susima — ''The snake shall not reach Ujjayini ..''

The Princes discuss in whispers how to eliminate Asoka while on his way to Ujjayini.

Scene 2

Night: Susima's Room — **Susima, 2 Indo-Greek Girls**

Susima alone is seen with two beautiful Indo-Greek Girls. They discuss in whispers. Their eyes and expressions reveal their dangerous intention. The Girls look confident and bold.

Susima — ''Go ahead. If you succeed, places are reserved for you in Palace.'' He hands over a bag of coins to the Girls. They bow down and go.

Scene 3

Highway — **Asoka, Escorts, Troops**

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Asoka is seen seated in a chariot. On his either side are seen some of his escorts and body-guards on horseback. A contingent of cavalry force is riding behind the chariot.

Scene 4

Sunset: Hillside **Asoka, Escorts**

Asoka reaches the outskirts of the small but beautiful city of Vidisa. Sun is setting on the western sky. The chariot and horses halt on an open ground near a hillside.

Asoka (*To charioteer*) "Halt"

The chariot comes to a halt. Asoka gets down. Escorts and cavalrymen also get down from horseback.

Asoka "We have travelled a long long way from Pataliputra. Let us rest here for the night at the foot of this beautiful hill. Pitch a Tent for me on the top of this hill."

Soldiers immediately start to work. Beneath the hill are pitched tents for the soldiers. Up above the hill is erected a tent for Asoka. Asoka climbs to the hilltop.

Scene 5

Fullmoon Night: Hillside Ground **Soldiers, Two Indo-Greek Girls, 5 Assassins in Disguise**

Night has advanced. In the deep blue sky is ascending the fullmoon in all its grandeur and beauty. Down the hill on the vast ground are lying the tired troops, scattered here and there. Some are asleep, some are eating their meals, some are resting and talking, some are singing songs and playing chess.

Among the troops are seen some local traders, showing their small articles for sale. They are moving from group to group, from individual to individual.

The traders open their bags and exhibit their commodities. Soldiers feel attracted to see and buy. They display beautiful stone images of gods, rings, clothes, beads, and various attractive articles.

With the traders are seen two beautiful dancing girls in local folk costume. They are playing musical instruments and singing songs in melodious voice. They are trying to attract the soldiers by their bodily charm and cunning eyes and smiles.

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A Soldier "Dear damsels ! How do you appear here from nowhere ? Have you fallen from the blue sky or from the body of the Moon to display your beauties to youthful soldiers like us who are away from their wives and ladyloves ?"

2nd Soldier "Are you Dream-Girls to come to us in dead of the night ?"

1st Girl "No, we are neither from the sky nor from the Moon. We are from our home town of Vidisa. Whenever travellers and traders pass by our town and halt here for rest, we come to entertain them with songs and dance to earn a little money. While the traders sell their goods, we sell our music."

Soon a number of soldiers gather round the girls to enjoy their music and dance. Some of them join the girls in singing and dancing following their tune. The two girls play musical instruments in their hand. They sing exciting songs. They expose their body in a way to attract men. More and more of soldiers gather around to enjoy their song and charm.

Some of the traders still go on selling their articles. Two of them are seen packing up their goods.

Soon they disappear into darkness.

Scene 6

Midnight: Hilltop Tent Interior **Asoka**

Inside his tent of the hilltop Asoka is sleeping on his bed. An earthen lamp is burning in a corner of the tent.

On the slopes of the hill are sleeping a dozen of Asoka's bodyguards.

From his bed, Asoka sees the movement of a faint shadow on the back canvas of the tent. He gets up in suspicion.

Asoka "Who moves outside ? Are you a guard ?"

No answer comes from outside. Asoka gets up from bed, puts his armour promptly and comes to the entrance of the tent.

Scene 7

Same: Exterior **Asoka**

Coming out of the tent, Asoka stands at its entrance. His eyes fall on the sleeping guards down on the hill slope. He looks towards the vast open ground at the foot of the hill. He finds dim lights at a few places and sees the sleeping soldiers under the moonlit sky.

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Asoka stands on to enjoy the beauty of nature. He looks to the sky and to the earth around. The full moon is now at its meridian.

His eyes suddenly catch two moving shadows vanishing into darkness down the hill. He looks towards the distances as far as his eyes can catch under bright moonlight.

Scene 8

Midnight: At a Distance

Far down the hill at some distance, through thick jungles on narrow zig zag road, a horse-driven cart is running very fast in westward direction. The rider on the horse is under a black veil, holding the reins and moving forward.

Scene 9

Night: Hilltop **Asoka**

From the hilltop Asoka's eyes fall on the fast running cart through the jungle path. He comes down a few steps. He finds the guards fast asleep. He finds his horse at the bottom of the hill.

Asoka comes down, gets up to his horse and rides in the direction of the running cart.

Scene 10

Night: Forest Road **Asoka (Age 20), Devi (Age 18)**

The cart is running fast. Asoka too is riding fast to catch it up. The road is long. Asoka's horse is coming up towards the cart.

Asoka "I say, halt !"

The rider drives the carst faster. Asoka makes his horse run as fast as possible. Soon he is seen approaching the cart from behind.

Asoka "Once again I say, Stop. Stop your horse if you are innocent !" The cart does not stop. Asoka takes out a dagger, aims it at the rider, and throws it forward to hit the person. A shricking female voice is heard at once.

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Episode Nine

Scene 11

Same **Asoka, Devi**

The person driving the cart falls down to ground from horse with a cry of pain. The cart comes to a halt. Asoka gets down from horse and runs towards the fallen victim. As he comes to the person lying on the road, to his utter surprise, he finds the wounded victim of his dagger a beautiful young girl. The dagger has struck her garments and cut her right shoulder. Asoka kneels down to attend to her wound.

Asoka (*in sadness*) ''What have I done ! Oh, my dear, why didn't you stop ! I took you to be robber ! Please forgive me. I feel deeply hurt by hurting an innocent soul like you.''

He puts his palm on the wound to stop the flow of blood from her body. He tears a portion of his garment and makes use of it as a bandage. Devi looks at the youthful Asoka with admiring eyes.

Asoka ''How are you riding alone in this part of the night ? Do you not know that it is a forest ? May I know who you are and what is your destination ?''

Devi ''I am Devi, daughter of a Vidisa merchant. On the occasion of the Buddha Purnima Night, I am carrying to the nearby Monastery food for the monks and nuns and medicine for the sick. Please leave me. I have to reach the place. It is already late. They must be waiting for me.''

Asoka ''But how did you dare to drive alon through the forest ? Did you not find others to help you ?''

Devi ''I was waiting for my father to accompany me. But he could not possibly come back from his place of work. So I hade to come alone. Moreover, this forest is a forest of peace. There is no fear from either the tigers or the robbers. The Buddhist monastery has changed the character of the inhabitants here. Please leave me to myself. I can go alone.''

Asoka ''You are wounded. You have lost blood from your body. I cannot see you alone. Be good enough to permit me to take you to the Monastery.''

Asoka helps Devi to get into the cart and he sits on Devi's horse to drive the cart. Asoka's horse follows the cart.

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Episode Ten

Commentary

Without taking into consideration that Devi was a Buddhist in her Faith and the daughter of a Sakya Merchant, Asoka married her. He did not think it necessary to obtain the consent of his father or mother and had no regard for the Emperor's pleasure or displeasure.

Scene 1

Night: Monastery Exterior

Monks and Nuns, Sick people, Asoka, Devi, Yasas, His Wife

At a forlorn place inside a forest there stands a Buddhist Monastery. It is past midnight. About 50 Monks and Nuns are sitting seperately in two groups on the open ground outside the Monastery and chanting the Buddhist hymns on the occasion of the Buddha-Purnima night. Earthen lamps are burning in several rows on the spacious verandah of the Monastery where a number of sick men and women are sitting in silence. The atmosphere is serene.

The horse-driven cart reaches the place. Devi gets down from the cart. Asoka gets down from horse. Three Monks and 2 Nuns come near to Devi.

Devi "Holy Savants, I am sorry for delay. My father did not return till about midnight. I waited for him to return in order to accompany me. When he did not come, I drove the cart myself. This noble man suspected me as a highway robber and followed me. But, coming to know my identity was good enough to bring me here."

Asoka is standing at a respectable distance. His eyes are fixed on the graceful and charming body of Devi. Her sweet voice appears to the Prince as unusual to charm his mind. The monks unload the packed food from the cart and also the medicine.

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Chanting of the hymns stop. Monks and nuns sit down on the ground to eat food. Devi and some nuns serve them. Devi goes up to the verandah and serves food to the sick men and women. Her face glitters under the light of the burning lamps.

Behind the Nuns on the ground is sitting a young mild-looking woman. Her eyes are closed. She is in deep meditation. Suddenly from the forest there emerges a strong robust man with an axe in his hand. He looks around and walks towards the lone woman sitting behind the nuns. In a feat of terrible anger, he pulls up the woman by holding her hairs. He is Yasas.

Yasas "You stupid lady ! How many times have I not warned you not to come here ! But you have no fear to heed my warnings ! I know you have come here this night secretly and in hiding to become a nun. But before you turn into a Buddhist, I shall finish you today here and now."

The woman screams as Yasas tries to drag her out. Asoka speedily advances to stop his action.

Asoka "You man ! Should you behave with a pious lady in this kind of uncivilised manner? Do you forget this is a holy place ? Do you forget this is the day of the birth of Buddha. Do you not hesitate to speak of violence before the monks and nuns ! Leave her to finish her prayers. Leave her to take her food."

Yasas (*furious*) "Who are you to speak these words to me ? She is my wife ! I can do to her anything I like. And, you look like a stranger and therefore perhaps do not know who am I !"

Asoka stands before Yasas as if to release his wife from his clutches.

Yasas "If you stand in my way, I can throw your body to the forest dead or alive. I have come to take my wife home. Go out of my presence if you love your life."

Asoka "I say, leave her to finish her prayer and eat her meal."

Yasas "Should Yasas obey your command, you young silly softhead !"

Yasas drags his wife a few yards when Asoka holds his hand in tight grip. Furious and feeling offended, Yasas raises his axe to hit Asoka. Asoka snatches it from his hand and throws it to ground. Yasas leaves his wife's bunch of hair and takes up the axe. Mad in anger, he advances towards Asoka to strike him down. Asoka takes out his sword from the scabbard and resists the attacker.

Monks and nuns look on helplessly. Some of them try to intervene. Yasas's wife catches hold of her husband's feet to prevent

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him from hitting Asoka. But Yasas gives her a strong kick. She falls down with a cry. Devi runs to her, lifts her up and takes her away.

Yasas and Asoka fight with each other with axe and sword. Yasas presents several heroic feats to humble Asoka, but Asoka outwits him each time and laughs aloud at his failure. Getting more and more offended, Yasas loses control over himself and resorts to furious attacks like a mad . But Asoka finally humbles him and throws him to ground like a dead body. He lifts his sword as if to strike down his head. Devi runs to him.

Devi (*softly*) "Noble Young Hero ! You have stunned us all by your valour. But, your valour is now leading you to violence ! Did you not say it yourself a few moments ago that this place is holy, this day is sacred, and did you not utter the name of Buddha and the word non-violence ! How then, noble stranger, would you lift your sword to commit violence on the one who does not know what he is doing ! Would you not be merciful to all of us by forgiving the man who is lying at your feet ?"

Devi holds Asoka's hand that holds the sword. Asoka calms down.

Asoka (*looking to Yasas*) "Dear Yasas, I spare you. At the same time, let me say, I admire your strength and courage. You are free."

Yasas (*getting up*) "Young Stranger ! Yasas never tasted defeat from anyone so far. Not even the strongest hill-chieftains or forest-dwellers have been able to humble me. But, you, a young boy, did it. I salute you, brave young man !"

The monks take Yasas to the verandah to take the Prasad.

Scene 2

Dawn: Forest Roads **Soldiers**

Soldiers of Asoka are riding across roads from corner to corner in search of the Prince. They are blowing trumpets and beating the drums to indicate their location of presence.

Scene 3

Dawn: Monastery **Asoka, Devi, Monks & Nuns, Yasas, Soldiers**

A cavalry force reaches the Monastery when it is yet twilight before the dawn. They get down to find Asoka in front of the Monastery. They lower their swords and bow down.

Captain "Your Royal Highness, the Noble Aryaputra, the *Raj-Pratinidhi*, Kumara

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Asoka ! Be glory be to you. Is your August Person safe ?''

Asoka — ''Yes, I am well. I came out in the night when you were asleep. I suspected this noble and pious lady on her horse as a highway thief and followed her to this place to discover her as an angel of peace. I did not want to disturb your quiet sleep, but for me it is rewarding to have spent a sleepless night.''

Asoka gets up to his horse. Soldiers ride behind him. They disappear towards the forest roads.

A Monk (*in surprise*) — ''Aryaputra Kumar Asoka ! The Viceroy of Avanti ! How lucky are we to see him in our Monastery ! His words show he is not hostile to us the Buddhists !

2nd Monk — ''But, we hear that this Prince, among all sons of Emperor Amitraghata, is the most violent in temper and most cruel in action. He put thousands of people to death in Taxila while suppressing a rebellion there !''

The Monks look to Devi and to her bandaged shoulder.

Monk — ''Sakya Kumari, you are lucky to have escaped death from his hands ! without ascertaining who was in the cart, he could throw his dagger to kill the occupant ! What a depraved man ! And, when poor Yasas fell to ground, he was about to cut him to pieces ! Was it expected from a hero ! He could have remained satisfied with his triumph over his foe ! But, he wanted to kill him !''

Devi — ''Let us not talk ill of a person who is willing to listen to reason ! Did he not put down his sword when I requested him to spare Yasas ! I saw tears in his eyes when he saw my blood ! The ways of the Princes and soldiers are different from our ways. But I think even the most cruel person can see reason to give up violence once he understands the merit of non-violence. Tathagata Buddha could convert fighting kings in battle fields to non-violent men.''

Monk — ''You are correct, Sakya Kumari. But who can change the mind of such Princes or Kings who are born for violence ? Who can ever approach them ?''

Scene 4

Inside Tent

Asoka

Back to his tent early in the morning, Asoka is sitting alone on his bed. A flash scene shows how Devi's face appears in his vision again and again. The scenes of the previous night pass in momentary flashes before his inner mind.

A Guard enters

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Guard — "Your Highness, A man named Yasas prays for a brief interview. He says, he has come to beg forgiveness for what he did last night and to offer his homage at you feet."

Asoka — "Oh, that ruffian of the previous night ! Well, bring him in."

Guard goes out and brings Yasas in. On entry, Yasas falls at the feet of Asoka weeping. Asoka indicated to the Guard to go out.

Yasas (*in tears*) — "My Lord, the Saviour of my life, I have come to pray for your forgiveness to this wretch. I raised my heinous hand against your noble self without knowing who you are. I pay my soul's homage to you. Kindly grant me pardon. I place myself at your feet as an humble slave."

Asoka (*in kind words*) — "Yasas, I admired your physical power last night. Without being a trained soldier in arts of warfare, you know how to attack your enemy as well as how to defend yourself ! I thankyou for your courage. I also feel pleased to see that you came to me to ask forgiveness."

Yasas is in tears. Asoka is moved to compassion to see in him a true repentance.

Asoka — "Are you an inhabitant of this place ?"

Yasas — "Yes, Aryaputra, I am a man of Vidisa. My job is to protect the wealthy merchants of Vidisa when marauders, robbers and plunderers come to loot their wealth. In doing that work, I learnt to be brave and learnt how to fight. Nobody, not even groups of robbers in combination have ever been able to humble me in fight. The merchants pay to me to live."

Asoka — "Would you like to join my force and come to Ujjayini with me as a royal guard ? I have appreciated your courage and strength !"

Yasas — "My Lord, My Master ! Can there be a greater fortune for this wretched creature than this ! I shall lay down my life for my noble master with the greatest pleasure. My life will be glorified in serving the great."

Asoka — "I am glad that you agree. By the way, who is that graceful girl who held my hand when I raised my sword against you ?"

Yasas observes Asoka's eyes which express love for Devi.

Yasas — "My Lord, Her name is Devi. People call her Vidisa Devi. She is the only daughter of the richest merchant of Vidisa. Her father is a Sakya in race who comes from the birth place of Gautama Buddha. He is also a Buddhist in faith. My Lord, Devi is really a remarkable girl. People of Vidisa almost worship her as a goddess for the qualities of her head and heart. She preaches to the people the religion of the Buddha. The Monastery you saw has been built by her father. Every fullmoon day of the month, Devi feeds there the monks and nuns, as well as the sick and the poor. My Lord, she is like an angel in human form. I may hate the Buddhists, but I adore in my heart Devi Sakya Kumari who is like an

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epitome of all the virtues.''

Asoka — ''Do you know it Yasas that last night I mistook her as a robber and wounded her with my dagger, but when I came to her, I saw her like a goddess of Forgiveness (Kshyama), bearing no malice or anger, not even resentment. I have thought of going to her house to offer my hundred apology to her, and to see for myself if the wound is healing up. Dear Yasas, would you take me to her house ?''

Yasas — ''My Lord, can I belive my ears for what I hear ! You are the Kumara, the Viceroy, the son of our Emperor. You are the Master of all Avanti, of all people of this place ! How can you come to a subject's house. I can at once bring the Sakya Kumari and her parents to the tent of our Master. I am sure, they will themselves run to Your Highness to pay their homage.''

Asoka — ''No, my friend, no. I have committed a wrong, and I want to atone it. Here is no question of my being the Viceroy and they being my subjects. It is the question of an impetuous youngman doing physical harm to an innocent young lady ! In fitness of things, therefore, the younman should go to the young lady to offer apology and beg forgiveness from her. It is a question of human feeling, the question of my soul's urge to see her.''

Yasas — ''My Lord, she is indeed a noble girl. When you left the place at dawn, she was full of praise for you. She never uttered a word about her injury.''

Asoka — ''I had seen in her eyes her forgiveness to this sinner even after I caused the pain, at that very moment when she was bleeding.''

Yasas — ''People of Vidisa say that Devi represents the inner virtues of the race of Buddha. That is one reason why she attracts so many devotees to her Monastery.'

Asoka (*smiling*) — ''I feel, I too am a devotee of the Sakya Kumari. I have lost my ego as the Viceroy. I shall be as humble before her as a penitent youth can ever be.''

Yasas — ''My Lord, my wife who is deeply devoted to Devi says that the Sakya Kumari has no equal beauty in whole Jambudvipa. Sinnce she looks like a Princess, she is fit only for a Prince. But her parents are unable to find a match for her as there is no Prince in the Sakya race of today.''

Asoka — ''Unable to find a match for her ! There is no Prince in the Sakya race ! Does Devi think of a Prince to marry ?''

Yasas (*smiling*) — ''Aryaputra ! Which unmarried girl does not think of marrying a Rajaputra of either the legends or of dreasm !''

Asoka stands up with delight. Smilingly he looks at Yasas.

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Asoka "Brave Yasas, Is not Asoka a Prince ? Does he not belong to the race of Kshatriyas like the Sakya race ?

Yasas "My Lord ! You mean..."

Asoka "Yes, my friend, I mean what you understand by your intelligence. Devi Sakya Kumari has won my heart. Please carry my heart's message to her and her parents that Asoka will never find another one like Devi to enthrone her in his heart. Please convey my desire to them that I shall visit their house tomorrow."

Asoka claps. A guard comes in and bows down.

Asoka (to the Guard) "Take my order to the Captains and the troops that we stay here in Vidisa for a few days.'

Scene 5

House of Sakya Merchant
Exterior

Merchant, Attendants,
Asoka, Yasas

The Sakya Merchant of Vidisa is waiting at the Gate of his house to receive Asoka. The Gate is decorated with arches of flowers. Ten girls are waiting with conches, sandal paste and garlands to receive the Prince.

Asoka and Yasas arrive on horseback and get down. Asoka is garlanded by the girls. Conches are blown. Flowers are showered. The Viceroy is taken in by the elderly Sakya Merchant.

Scene 6

Interior

Merchant, Asoka, Yasas, Girls

Asoka takes his seat on a throne-like chair, inside a gorgeously decorated room of the Merchants Mansion. Girls perform Arati with lighted earthen lamps. Yasas is standing near the merchant who is with folded hands.

Merchant "Your Highness, Kumara Aryaputra, am I worthy of the honour you have so graciously bestowed on this humble subject by your august visit !"

Asoka "Sakyaputra ! I may ask you in return if I am worthy of the hands of the Sakya Kumari, your noble and gracious daughter ? Will she consider me worthy of her ?"

Merchant "Aryaputra, Devi has her fears. Fear of being the consort of a Prince of the Mauryan House, the Rulers of *Bharatavarsha* ! It is for your highness to obtain her consent if she would consider herself worthy of your grace."

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The Merchant leads the Prince towards the inner apartment.

Scene 7

Inner Apartment **Devi, Her Mother, Asoka**

Inside the Women's Apartment of the Merchant's Mansion, is sitting Devi on a decorated seat, putting up gorgeous attire. Her mother is standing near her.

Mother "Devi, you have heard everything about the desire of the young Prince to marry you. He has himself come to know of your consent. My heart throbs to think of it. We are Buddhists. You are wedded to Buddha's messages — the messages of meekness and non-violence, of purity and selflessness. A Prince of the Mauryan Imperial House is of a different mould. How can you be his consort ! My dear Devi, allow me to fall at the feet of the Prince to tell him that you are unfit to be his wife."

Mother is nervous. Devi stands up. She is silent and thoughtful. Her eyes are tearful. Asoka enters escorted by the Merchant.

Merchant "My daughter, salute at the feet of Kumara Aryaputra."

Merchant goes out. Devi folds her hands saying 'Namaste'. She bows her head. Asoka reciprocates by saying 'Namaste'. He also salutes Devi's mother.

Mother "Aryaputra, I am Devi's mother. May I say what my daughter feels - She feels she in not worthy of you."

Asoka looks at the eyes of Devi and turns his eyes to Devi's mother.

Asoka "Venerable Mother ! In other words, does the Sakya Kumari feel that I am unworthy of her qualities and virtues, and, therefore unworthy of her hands !"

Mother "No, Aryaputra, it is not like that. She feels that your ways of life are different from her ways of life."

Asoka (*softly*) "Cannot the two ways meet at some point when the two Travellers walk together on the path of life with their hearts united ?"

Mother "Aryaputra ! How can the worldly royal path of Prince meet at any point with the parallel path of an unworldly pilgrim walking towards salavation !"

Asoka "Mother, I understand what you mean. My path is the path of violence, power, pomp and pelf; of ambition, strife and struggle. Her path is the path of renunciation, peace, purity and service. The two paths are too

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distant from each other. Yet, the horizon is one from one end of the earth's circle to the other. Cannot the two souls rise higher up to that sublimity of the horizon to forget of the narrow paths they walk upon ?''

Mother remains silent. Asoka looks at Devi with eyes of deep attachment for a few moments.

Asoka ''Devi, forget me for the wound I inflicted on your body. This wound, I pray, will heal up soon. But,let me go back with a wound in my heart which I pray, need never heal up as I shall like to carry it for ever. I came to beg forgiveness which you have granted. I need not cause any pain in your mind by pressing upon my selfish desire. Let my pain turn into pleasure that I have not caused you pain of your displeasure.''

Asoka is about to turn back when Devi speaks.

Devi ''Aryaputra, I may rather give up this insignificant life than cause the slightest pain to your noble mind. I am ready to be your's if you wish to take me as your's.'' They look towards each other.

Scene 8

Merchant's House

Asoka, Devi, Merchant, Yasas, Troops, Buddhists, Brahmin Priests, Exterior

In the presence of the crowds of people, soldiers, monks and nuns, as well as Brahmin Priests, the marriage of Asoka with Vidisa Devi is being performed amidst great pomp and splendour. Asoka and Devi exchange garlands as sacred hymns are chanted by the Brahmin Priests accompanied by silent prayers of the Buddhist monks and nuns. After the ceremony, Devi distributes clothes and sweets to an assembled gathering of the needy and the poor. Asoka observes the scene of charity.

Scene 9

The Flash Scene of Asoka and Devi's farewell from the House of the Merchant after their marriage. A decorated Chariot carry the two through the street of Vidisa to the cheers of the people on either side. Two women are in tears to see Devi going away.

Scene 10

The Flash Scene of the soldiers of Asoka celebrating the marriage at foot of the hill around their tents. They are dancing their martial dances to the beating of the drums and blowing of the trumpets, and to the playing of the army music.

The Chariot carrying the Prince and his wife reaches the foot of the hill. Asoka and Devi climb up the steps to reach their Tent on the hilltop.

Sun is setting across the hill.

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Episode Eleven

Commentary

When Asoka was still in Vidisa after his marriage, the enemy agents made an attempt on his life. The news of his marriage without anybody's consent annoyed the Emperor greatly. Court intrigues continued till the Prime Minister Khallataka fell from his position.

Scene 1

Night: Hilltop Tent: Interior **Asoka, Devi**

It is midnight. Inside Asoka's tent are seen floral decorations indicating a honeymoon night. Asoka and Devi are exchanging words of love with each other. Lamps are burning in different corners of the tent emiting faint light.

Devi "My Beloved ! I now realise that love knows no barriers, no logic, and no fear. You forgot my status, forgot your position and forgot obtaining consent from your parents for your marriage. It only proves the depth of your love towards me."

Asoka "You are correct. Love knows no obstacles. For sake of my love to you and your love to me, I can overcome every difficulty."

Devi (*looking around the walls of the tent*) "Aryaputra, these arms which hang on the walls — swords, spears, arrows, armour, daggers and shields — these fearful instruments I had never seen in my life. I fear to see these objects of violence."

Asoka "Oh, dear ! Close your eyes to the objects you hate. Or, think of them as flowers, garlands, incense or arts. When hearts unite in love, let all external elements of dislike disappear. Like an ocean covering within

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itself mountain and rocks, deadly snakes and dangerous whales, let the ocean of our love submerge all fears and anxieties, all worries and objects of dislike.''

Asoka fixes a bunch of flowers on Devi's hairs.

Scene 2

Exterior **5 Enemy Agents, Yasas**

Outside the tent, in deep darkness, are seen five assassins in black shrouds trying to crawl to the hilltop.

They are next seen hiding behind the tent, lying on the ground behind wild shrubs. Asoka's bodyguards are seen sleeping at various distant points down the hill slopes. Only Yaṣas is seen wide awake sitting on a piece of rock in front of the tent at a distance.

The assassins see from outside that the lamps inside the tent are put off. It is now deep dark inside the tent. Outside, it is moonlight. Two assassins approach the tent and reach the nearest point on the back side to find through the canvas the shadows of Asoka and Vidisa Devi. They aim their arrows as accurately as possible and release the arms in deadly exactitude.

Scene 3

Interior **Asoka, Devi**

Two sharp long arrrows pierce through the canvas and graze over the garments of Devi who is lying on her bed. She screams. Asoka finds the arrows falling to ground. He rolls down Devi to the floor and runs outside. Fresh arrows now come in showers from outside and dash to the floor. Devi screms further. One arrow strikes her body on the ground.

Scene 4

Exterior **Yasas, Assassins, Soldiers**

Yasas springs up to action on hearing Devi's cry. He blows the trumpet to raise alarm. Soldiers get up with arms. Yasas runs to the tent. He finds Asoka just emerging from tent. Yasas runs behind the tent. He finds the assassins with naked swords trying to get into the tent from behind. Yasas resists them with all his might. Fighting continues for some time till Yasas cuts down three of the five assassins. Soldiers with burning torches soon surround the tent. They reach the spot where Yasas is standing bleeding and 3 dead bodies are lying in a pool of blood. Two assassins are seen running down very fast. Soldiers run behind them and strike them down.

Down below at a distance Yasas spots out two shadowy figures running away. He runs

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behind them in full speed and overcome them. They are the two Indo-Greek girls. They try to stab Yasas Failing in that, they try to push their poisonous rings into Yasas's mouth. But, though wounded and bleeding, Yasas captures them both, and carries them under his either arm to the hilltop to Asoka's tent.

Scene 5

Tent: Interior **Asoka, Devi, Yasas, 2 Girls**

It is now fully lighted inside the tent of Asoka with torches burning. Outside the tent are seen armed soldiers guarding every corner. Inside on her bed, Devi is sitting in stupor, with garments torn by arrows. Asoka is wiping out drops of blood oozing out of her left arm. Yasas enters into the tent with the girls held tightly and throws them down on the floor.

Yasas "These are the damsels of death. Their comrades have been despatched to hell. I have spared the lives of these accursed ones to hear from them about the snake-charmer who sent these venomous snakes to sting you,"

The two girls are sitting in kneel-down posture trembling in fear.

Asoka "Yasas ! I can well imagine the hand behind this attempt to kill me. I swear, I shall destroy him in time."

Devi "Oh, dear ! Do not swear like this. Instead, grant the person your forgiveness. After all, God has saved you. Please be merciful."

Asoka "Devi, think for a moment how dangerously dreadful and deadly are the devils who wanted to kill both of us on the very day of our marriage ! And, they will go on doing it again and again till they succeed in their heinous crime. I shall have no mercy for them. Even Gods will have no mercy towards those who do not have regard for the lives of others."

Asoka bends down and looks at the faces of the two girls who are trying to hide their faces. His face expresses great surprise.

Asoka "I have seen these faces. They seem to have changed their appearance, yet they are not beyond recognition."

Asoka (*to girls*) "Are you the two Palace maids from Pataliputra ! Speak the truth ! Tell me who sent you to carry out this dangerous mission !"

Yasas points a naked sword to their necks. Devi comes to Yasas in fear of violence. The girls tremble in fear.

Devi "Yasas, they are trembling in fear. Please have pity on them. Please do remove the fear of death from their mind by withdrawing your sword."

Yasas "I am taking them out to collect information and trace out if other assassins are hiding."

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He lifts the girls by their arms.

Devi "They need your mercy. When one is in fear, he or she calls for sympathy. I am sure, they will speak the truth. My appeal to you, kindly do not put them to torture to extract confession."

Yasas drags away the two girls from inside the tent.

Scene 6

Pataliputra Palace **Bindusara, Dharma**
Dharms's Room: Interior

Inside her room inside the Maurya Palace, Queen Dharma is offering her prayers before the image of Vishnu when Bindusara comes in excited and angry.

Bindusara "Dharma ! You must have heard about your son's marriage at Vidisa ! Did he obtain your consent to marry a girl of that origin ?"

Dharam "Aryaputra ! I have heard of the marriage. If Asoka did not take your permission, he also did not take my consent."

Bindusara "What a disgrace is your son to my family ? To the Dynasty of the Mauryas ! To the people of this great Empire ! My head hangs down in shame. And, how audacious is he ! He did not think it proper to obtain my permission ! Does he think I am not his father ? Does he think I am not the Emperor ? Does he think I am dead ?"

Bindusara shows extreme annoyance. Dharma looks sad and sorry.

Bindusara "I can better recall him from Ujjayini as Viceroy. He is not worthy of my favour and is unworthy of a high position. What would the subjects of Avanti think of him ? If a Prince does not know to be loyal and obedient and respectful to his own father, how can he command the respect, fear and loyalty of his subjects ?"

Dharma "Aryaputra! I pray to you to forgive Asoka. As a youth and in a momentary passion of love, he might have taken his own decision to marry that girl with the hope that you would be pleased to bless the marriage."

Bindusara "Momentary passion of love ! Does it wipe out all sense of decency ? Yes, it is your son and your son only who can perform such indecent act !"

Dharma is suddenly roused to emotional strength of mind. She looks agitated.

Dharma "Today you blame Asoka for his love ! Today you blame my son for his marriage without your consent ! Why do you forget your own love

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episodes and marriage ? Did you not fall in love with me in a momentary passion and marry me ? Did you obtain the consent of your revered father, the great Chandragupta Maurya before marrying me ? No. You did not. Yet, yet he was magnanimous enough to give his blessings and affection to us. Did you not marry some of your other wives in the same way ? Forgetting all these you now blame my son Asoka for his love and marriage !''

Bindusara (*annoyed*) ''Do not revive old memories and old stories in my mind. They are painful to think. I married you under wrong notion that you belonged to the highest class and at a time when my father was busy on his conquering mission....''

Dharma intervenes before her husband finished his words.

Dharma ''Yes, I belonged to the highest class !''

Bindusara ''Well, if it is that, what has your precious son done ? He has married the daughter of a trader belonging to a lower strata of social structure ! How do you justify this ?''

Dharma ''May be a trader in profession. But does not the bride come from the race of the Sakyas, a race that is honoured by all for giving birth to Tathagata Buddha ? Are not the Sakyas as high as the Mauryas ? I am proud of my son for having married a Sakya Kumari !''

Bindusara ''Proud of your son ! Well, feel proud of him for having given him birth ! But as for me as a father, I feel ashamed of him !''

Bindusara leaves the room in hurry.

Dharma begins to sob.

Scene 7

Evening: Forest Road: Riverside **Yasas, Two Girls, Cavaliers**

Yasas, with the two captive girls and guards, is seen in a small chariot, riding towards Pataliputra. Escorting the chariot are seen 10 horsemen, riding in front and riding behind. A river flows by the side of the forest road.

A Girl ''Please stop the chariot for a moment. Please untie my hands. Please take me to the river. I must wash my head and body, or else, I shall die before reaching Pataliputra to confess my sin. I am fainting under boiling heat. My head reels. Please have mercy on me. Please take me to the river ghat.''

She weeps. She shows signs of break down. She pretends extreme fatigue, pain and agony. She continues beating her head at random, as if turning mad.

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Yasas "Charioteer ! Stop the chariot."

The chariot stops. Yasas unties the girl who wants to get down. The other girl pretends as quietly sleeping. Yasas looks to the horsemen.

Yasas "Two of you take her to the river for a bath, and bring her back as soon as possible."

Two soldiers accompany the girl towards the river. She pretends weakness and unable to walk. The two soldiers almost lift her physically and leave her at the river ghat and wait. With much difficulty the girl reaches the water. But, next moment, in a flashing speed, she jumps to the water and sinks deep down in the river and speeds away. She rises up at a considerable distance inside the river, and swims in full soeed. The two soldiers jump into water and swim up to catch her. But she swims faster and disappears. Darkness descends on river.

Scene 8

Night: Khallataka's Room: Interior **Khallataka, Yasas, One Captive Girl**

It is dead of night. Inside the room of the Prime Minister, Khallataka, Yasas is seen with the assassin girl. An earthen lamp burns in a corner.

Yasas "Mahamantriji, here is the letter of the Viceroy Prince Asoka for your perusal."

He passes over a sealed letter to Khallataka who reads it carefully. He raises his head and looks at the girl.

Khallataka "It is true which you have confessed before the Viceroy ? If you speak out the truth again before me, your life may be saved. If you try to hide the fact, you know the method which is applied to extract the truth from persons like you ! My duty is to take you to the Emperor. His duty will be to hand over you to the persons who know to take out truth from your locked heart. I hope, you understand what awaits you."

The girl turns extremely fearful.

Yasas "I have deposited you at the feet of the Mahamatri who is an incarnation of kindness. In your interest, you better disclose everything freely and frankly, and pray for mercy."

The girl starts sobbing. She kneels down before the Prime Minister with folded hands, and speaks in fear.

Girl "When death awaits me, God will be merciful if I speak the truth before I die. At least, I may escape Hell. The Crown Prince set me on this

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heinous mission to kill Prince Asoka before he reached Ujjayini. In my lust for wealth and in hope of getting favour from the Crown Prince, I did all that sinful act which has been reported to you. I swear it in the name of God that I and the other accomplices tried our best to take the life of Prince Asoka.''

She puts her head on the feet of the Prime Minister and weeps bitterly.

Scene 9

Night: Susima's Bedroom: Exterior **Women Guards, The Escaped Girl**

It is dead of night. Outside the bed-room of Prince Susima, three women Guards are keeping watch with naked swords in their hands. The girls who escaped from Yasas's hands appers before the Guards. She is in a black shroud. She shows the Guards her Ring and is allowed to reach the door. She slowly knocks at the door, and the door opens. She gets in. The door is closed from inside.

Scene 10

Interior **Susima, Girl, Guards**

Seeing the girl inside his room, Prince Susima feels so much delighted that he drinks a full glass of wine and embraces her in an amoral posture.

Susima ''Come, dear, come ! My love and my gifts await you. I congratulate you for finishing your work so quickly and for returning to me so safely !''

The girl is visibly in stupor. Her eyes are in tears. She trembles. She stands silent. Susima's eyes get wide open.

Susima ''Tell me quickly if you have accomplished your work ?''

She falls at his feet and sobs. Susima lifts her up and holds her face tightly in the grip of his palms and looks stright into her dull eyes.

Susima ''Tell me, did you fail in your attempt ? Where is the other girl?

Girl ''My Lord, My Saviour ! We had almost come to the point of killing the Prince. But we were caught. Our five assassins were all killed. A ruffian named Yasas chained us and carried us towards the Capital. With great difficulty, I managed to escape in order to inform you in time before that ruffian takes the other girl to the Prime Minister. All through the Journey, he was persuading us to confess about the plot before Khallataka, and to swear before him that you sent us to kill Prince Asoka.''

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Susima flares up in uncontrollable temper.

Susima "You wrtcched woman ! You confessed about my involvement which you promised never to do ? Did I not ask you to die rather than utter may name ? If you live, you will speak my name to the Emperor too. You deserve...."

Susima stabs the girl and throws her down. He claps, and opens the door. 3 women guards come in.

Susima "She came to kill me in this dead of the night. Take her body secretly and throw it into the Ganga. Do not disclose to anyone that she came here to stab me. If you disclose her death, you will be suspected of a plot to kill me as you allowed her to enter into room in this part of the night. In trust I gave her my ring insignia by which she alluded you and reached my door. But, now I see, she is an agent of an enemy."

The women Guards roll the body under a thick over and go out quickly carrying the dead girl.

Scene 11

Late Night: Narrow Lane **Yasas, Captive Girl,, 5 Agents of Susima**

It is the last quarter of that night. Yasas, disguished as an old man with a bent-down body is going to his hiding place with that captive Indo-Greek Girl after their meeting with the Prime Minister. The Girl is also in disguise as an old woman and is under a thick blanket. Five Agents of Susima suddenly fall upon them to kill or capture them.

Yasas promptly takes his own form as a stout fighter, while the girl takes position to face the enemy with a dagger in hand. The struggle turns fierce. It continues at the dead end of a lane, far from the inhabitated areas of the city. Yasas, by showing great tact and physical vigour, finally overcomes the enemy with the help of the girl, and they are able to kill all the five of the attackers. Yasas and the girl run away towards some unknown hideout.

Scene 12

Dawn: Khallataka's House: Exterior **Susima**

Prince Susima gets from his horse in front of the house of Khallataka early in the Dawn. He is in disguise.

Scene 13

Interior **Khallataka, Susima**

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Episode Eleven

Before a stunned Prime Minister, Prince Susima removes his garb and stands up in his real form. His eyes are red. He is in high temper. Khallataka looks grave and serious. He keeps standing before the Prince, apprehending something worst.

Susima — "Did you believe all that you heard last midnight from Asoka's Agents ?"

Khallataka — "God only knows the truth. I had to hear since I have the ears, and that too, as the ears of a Prime Minister ! I am duty bound to hear things as reported to me for the knowledge of my Master, the Emperor !"

Susima — "My question is straight. And, I want a straight answer. I am not prepared to hear whether you have ears or not ! Keep aside your diplomatic stance, and tell me straight away, do you believe what the enemies of the Crown Prince say ?"

Khallataka — "If I say I do not believe, God will not forgive me."

Susima (*agitated*) — "So, you have taken their words as the sacred words of the Vedas. You have no mind to exercise your intelligence to guess that Asoka has engineered a plot to disgrace me. Should I believe that the old Prime Minister has lost his brain to understand that the Viceroy Asoka is envious of the Crown Prince Susima ?"

Khallataka — "Honoured Crown Prince ! You only know the truth if Asoka engineered the conspiracy to kill him to disgrace you ! I have no brain, as you say, to guess things. So, I have only one course open for me — to retire from Office like any old man."

Susima — "If you mean what you say, better retire at once on grounds of your senility and that too in the larger interest of the Empire. When a man believes in untruth, he is unfit to hold any position."

Khallataka — "i do not agree with your charge that I believe in untruth. But agree with your argument that I am old. In the larger interest of the State, I shall tender my resignation forthwith, before the Sun covers its first quarter of journey in the sky. I repent that I did not retire earlier ! Let the interest of the Empire now rest on your shoulder as the Crown Prince."

Susima — "I thank you for your decision. But let me tell you as the Crown Prince that for sake of your life and survival after retirement, you should keep your tongue tight about the untruth you have heard. Do you get the meaning of what I say?"

Khallataka — "Of course ! This old man still possesses that little intelligence to understand the meaning of what you say. I am not going to speak a word about the assassination attempt on Prince Asoka to the Emperor. Not a word, now or ever."

Susima — "I pray for your long and peaceful life after retirement. But the key to

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your life and peace lies in your hand, not in my prayer. I hope you understand this.''

Susima goes out. Khallataka stands on. He takes out from beneath his bed the letter of Asoka and tears it up to pieces. He next trembles in rage, as usual with the character of old Brahmins of ancient times when insulted.

Khallataka (*to himself*) ''Accursed be the Crown Prince. Oh, God ! What will happen to this land of Bharat if this deprayed man of today becomes the Emperor of the coming days ! If Khallataka lives, he will see to the ruin of this man for sake of this holy land.''

Scene 14

Imperial Court — Bindusara, Khallataka, Radhagupts, Princes and Courtiers

Bindusara is holding his Court to announce the resignation of Prime Minister Khallataka. He is on the Throne.

Bindusara (*standing up*) ''Courtiers ! On grounds of his old age, our Prime Minister Khallataka has decided to retire from his high office. I have given my consent. We pray for his long life.''

The Courtiers stand up to say ''May God bless our Venerable Prime Minister to live for long long years.''

Bindusara ''I appoint Radhagupta as the Prime Minister of the Mauryan Empire. Sage Chanakya liked him in his youth, gave him his blessings to serve the Empire. I present Radhagupta to the Court.''

From among the Courtiers, Radhagupta comes up to the platform and bows before the Emperor. Bindusara presents him the robe of honour.

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Episode Twelve

Commentary

Asoka and Vidisa Devi live their happy conjugal life in the ancient and beautiful city of Ujjayini. Soon are born to them son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra who are trained by their mother in disciplines of Buddhist beliefs.

In Pataliputra, Emperor Bindusara, though middle-aged, shows symptoms of rapid physical decline. Prime Minister Radhagupta and other Ministers enter into an intrigue to bring back Asoka to the Capital to counteract Susima's ambition to become the Emperor.

Scene 1

Ujjayini Palace:Garden — **Asoka (Age 27), Devi (Age 25), Mahindra (Age 8), Sanghamitra (6)**

In front of the massive and imposing viceregal palace of Ujjayini, within the compound, is a beautiful garden, full of flowers, water-fountains and small ponds. Asoka is seen in the garden holding his little son Mahindra (aged 2) and Devi is seen near him with a little baby daughter of a few months in her hands. They are in happy and jovial mood.

Asoka — "Look, I have named our son as `Mahindra' because someday he will be the `Indra' of the Earth, that is, King of the World."

Devi(*smiling*) — "Yes, you want to see him a greater king than your father andd grandfather. But I want to see him as a great Savant a king of all virtues and goodness whose glory will be greater than the glory of any earthly king."

Asoka — "Think as you like. Now, what name do you propose for our baby daughter ?"

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Devi "I have thought of her name as `Sanghamitra' — that is, the Friend of the Buddhist Sangha. I want to see her as a patron of the Sangha while serving the Bhishus and Bhikshunis."

Asoka "Won't you like to see her as a Queen ?"

Devi "Yes, of course ! She will be a queen with a difference — a queen to rule over a spiritual realm."

Asoka "I am told, more than a father, it is the mother who moulds the character of the children. So it is your responsibility to rear up the children to be worthy of the Mauryan race."

Asoka leaves Mahindra near Devi and goes out of the garden. Devi holds both the children on her either arms and stands in front of a water-fountain.

The wheel of time circles six rounds. *Mahindra is now seen as a boy of 8, and Sanghamitra a girl of 6. Devi is standing near a small pond of water, full of waterlily. While she is looking at the fountain, Mahindra and Sanghamitra are observing the small and big fishes playing in the pond.*

Devi "Dear ones ! I tell you a story. One day, Gautama Buddha as a young child like you was observing the games of the fishes in a pond. His father King Suddhodana said: `Look my boy, how happily are the fishes playing in the pond !" Gautama asked `Father, I do not find any happiness in them. I see how the big fishes are trying to eat up the small ones, and the small ones are trying to escape from death. It is no happiness, it is the pain of existence."

Mahindra "Maa ! tell me something more of child Gautama and his father."

Devi "King Suddhodana took little Gautama to a plant with beautiful flowers. He pointed his finger to a blooming rose and said: `Look Gautama, how beautiful is the flower !' Gautama asked: `Father, look to the next flower near to it which has decayed and dried up ! This blooming flower of today will turn to be a decayed flower tomorrow. So, what is the value of this momentary beauty either of a rose or of a man'?"

Mahindra "What did the King say in reply?"

Devi "The King had no reply to give. He only felt surprised to see the intelligence of the little child and also felt deeply sorry to see his detachment towards the worldly pleasures."

Mahindra "Maa, I want to be like Prince Gautama."

Devi "My boy, you cannot be like Him. No one can be. He is the God, greater than all gods. You should try to be a humble disciple of Gautama Buddha by giving up attachment towards earthly desires and pleasures. Pray for His Blessings from your childhood."

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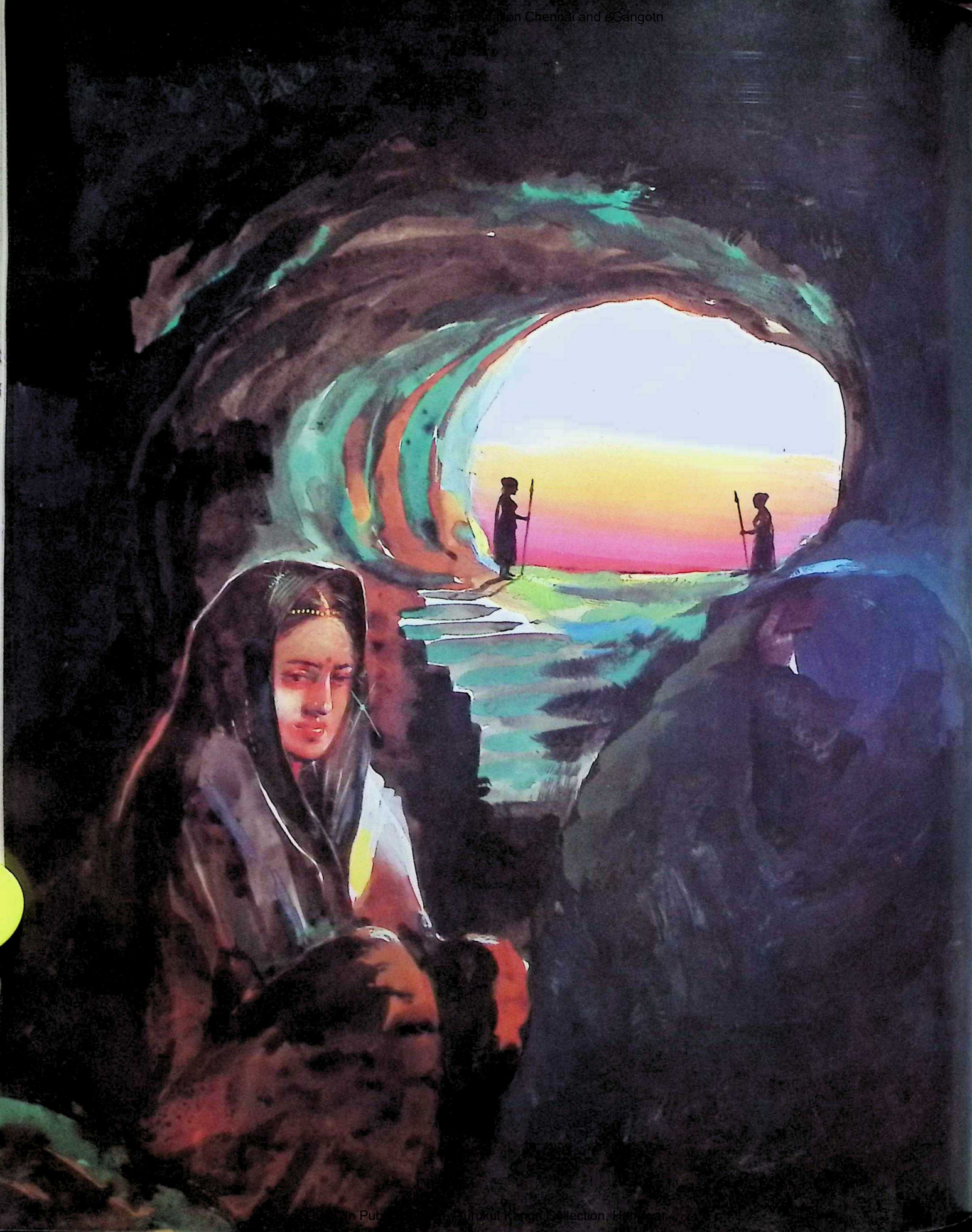

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Angry Prince Susima Suspects Taxilan Amatyas of conspiracy

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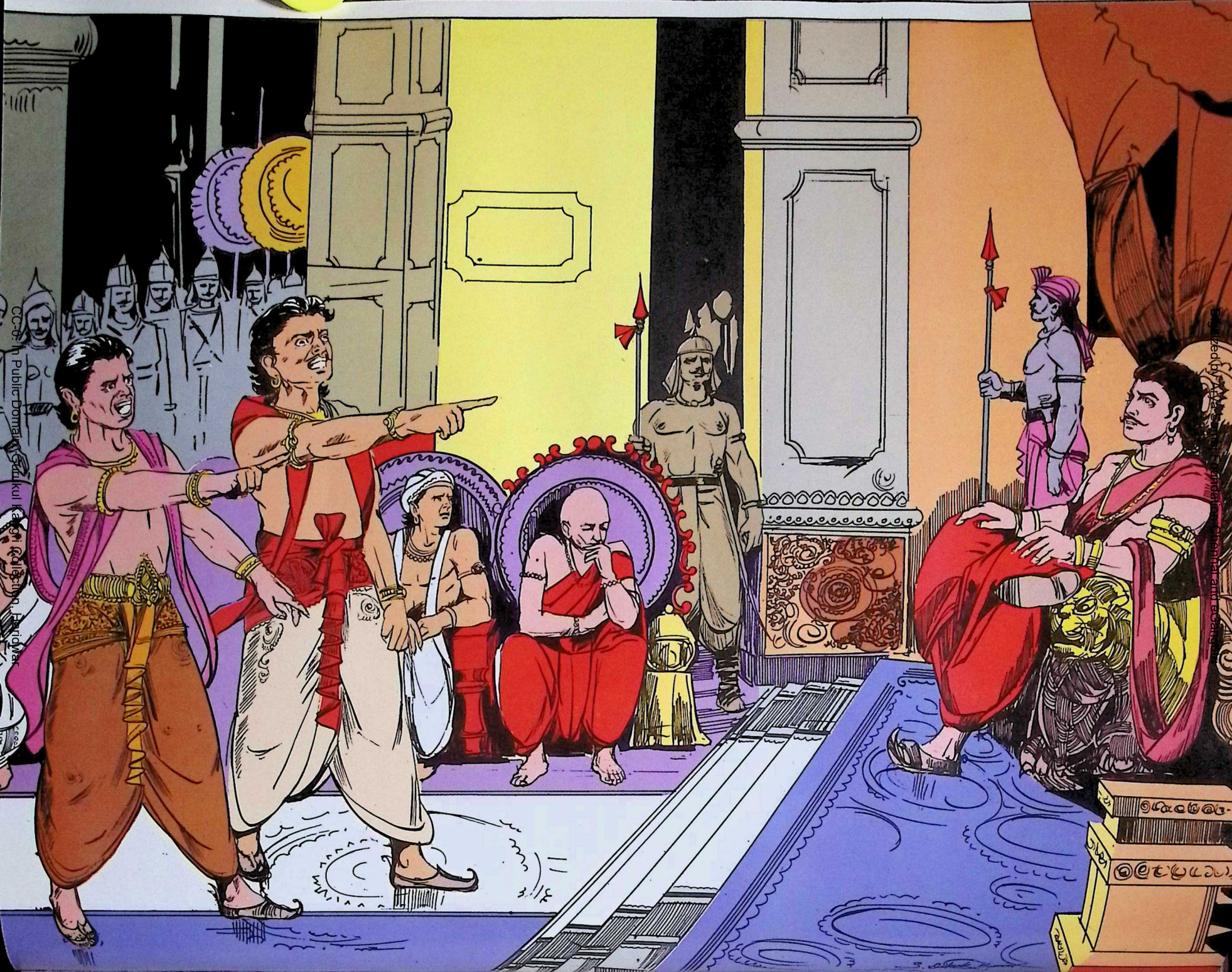

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Sanghamitra — "Maa, tell me more stories about Gautama."

Devi — "Yes, I shall tell you many stories about Him. Every night before you sleep, both of you will hear about Buddha. It is evening. Let us now sit down more and sing in praise of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha."

Devi sits down on grass with the children on either side. They sing together:"Buddham Saranam Gachchami, Dharmam Saranam Gachchami, Sangham Saranam Gachchami."

Scene 2

Bindusara's Apartment: Interior

Bindusara, Chief, Spy, (*Later on*) Astrologer,

Emperor Bindusara is holding confidential discussions with the Chief Spy who reports news from all parts of the Empire and of outside countries.

Spy — "Your Majesty, there is perfect peace everywhere in the Empire."

Bindusara — "Are the people of Ujjayini happy with the administration of Asoka ?

Spy — "Yes, they are highly satisfied with their Viceroy."

Bindusara — "What about political developments outside ?"

Spy — "The Greek Kings are in internal troubles. They are also quarrelling among themselves. There is no fear from their side to our frontiers."

Bindusara — "What about Kalinga in the south ?"

Spy — "There is good news from that side. The old King of Kalinga is dead. With his death, his dynasty is extinct. The Kalingan leaders, representing all regions between the rivers Ganga and Godavari, have decided to rule Kalinga collectively till they trace out any distant descendant of their ancient-most dynasty known as the Chedi Dynasty. The Kalingans believe that Rajarsi Vasu was the founder of that dynasty and that his remote descendants might be living somewhere in Kalinga or in the wilds of the Vindhya mountains. For the time, Kalinga is like a republic. It appears that Kalinga will soon enter into a phase of turmoil without a King. We do not expect therefore any fear to our southern frontiers."

Bindusara — "Any report about people's resentment on any issue ?"

Spy — "Your Majesty ! There is some whisper among the Priests and Brahamin Pandits of Pataliputra on a small issue !"

He hesitates to speak.

Bindusara (*surprised*) — "What is that issue ?"

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Spy — "They say, the Crown Prince has no son so far, whereas, the son of Prince Asoka is now eight years old. If Prince Susima will have no son, it is the son of Asoka who will become the King in future. It is this apprehension which prompts them to a whispering campaign about the future of the Magadh Empire !"

Bindusara — "What is the apprehension or misapprehension about it? What harm is there if Asoka's son becomes King after Susima's reign ?"

Spy — "They say, the son of Asoka is also the son of a Buddhist Mother and is being trained from the beginning of his life to live like a Buddhist. They say, no empire will be safe in hands of a Buddhist non-violent king !"

The Emperor looks thoughtful. They Spy bows down and goes out. An Astrologer comes in. He takes his seat before the Emperor.

Bindusara — "Raj Jyotshi ! Have you heard about my people's apprehensions about my future successors to the Throne ?"

Astrologer — "Your Majesty ! I am aware of it. The elders fear that the Throne of Magadh may pass in the hands of Prince Mahindra, son of Prince Asoka. They say, it will be a serious threat to the stability of the State."

Bindusara — "But Mahindra is not a Buddhist, her mother may be. My son Asoka is not a Buddhist. So, his son cannot be taken as Buddhist !

Astrologer — "It is already known to the elders and the Priests that Mahindra's mother, the Sakya Kumari, is training her son in the ways of the Buddhists — to believe in non-violence, and renunication. With that attitude, Mahindra cannot be a King. But, in case, the Crown Prince Susima gets no son, Mahindra may claim the throne after his uncle's reign. This appears as an issue to many."

Bindusara — "Are there no effective religious rites to invoke the mercy of the gods and goddesses to bless Susima and Sumana with a son?"

Astrologer — "There are, and we have to do it. But who knows the ways of Heaven ! If the Karma of Susima stands in his way not to have a son, even gods cannot help. Destiny (*Bhagya*) is above all gods and goddesses."

Bindusara — "I have so many sons. After Susima, any son of any other Prince can come to the Throne."

Astrologer — "Your Majesty, it is not that simple. Mahindra is the eldest of your grandsons. Unless his father Asoka is disqualified for future kingship by a royal decree, Asoka's son will have a legitimate claim to the Throne after his uncle Susima."

Bindusara — "How can I disqualify Asoka from the line of succession when he is the second prince after Susima?"

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Astrologer — "Your Majesty ! When you raise this question, it is my duty to give an answer. Asoka can be disqualified on the ground that he married a Buddhist woman without the sanction of the priests. And, his sons from that Buddhist mother are unfit for the Throne. Asoka can be disqualified since his sons cannot provide a line of succession to the Throne of Magadh,"

Bindusara looks worried.

Bindusara — "What need is there to consult my horoscope when my dear son Susima is having no son, and when the future of my dynasty creates anxiety in the mind of my beloved subjects. Raj Jyotish, you have no need to tell me of my own future hereafter."

Scene 3

Night:Susima's Apartment — **Susima, Sudatta, Sugatra, Dancing Girls**

Crown Prince Susima and his two other brothers are enjoying a dance performance while drinking. The Dancing Girls leave the room at the end of the dance. The three brothers discuss about their political strategy.

Sudatta — "Brother, You have been recognised as the Yuvaraja (Crown Prince) for years by now. It is time for you to become now the Ujaraja (Vice-regent). When our father is unwell, you have to run the whole administration. Taking advantage of the Emperor's ill health, Prime Minister Radhagupta behaves like a virtual Emperor."

Sugatra — "I have also been thinking of it for long. Unless our elder brother takes up the threads of administration to his hands, the power of the Prime Minister will grow beyond bounds."

Susima — "I thought of Radhagupta as a good and not a cunning man. But I find him as difficult a man as that old fool Khallataka. Radhagupta perhaps does not understand what I can do to him !"

Sudatta — "He can be thrown to the dustbin as his predecessor was. Poor Khallataka is now living on charity from the temple priests and almost begging.

The Princes laugh heartily.

Sugatra — "Susima, if you raise the question of becoming the Vice-regent before the Emperor, he will be only too glad to agree."

Susima — "Our Mother can raise the issue more effectively than I can."

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Scene 4

Bindusara's Bedroom — **Bindusara, Susima's Mother, Physician, Radhagupta**

Bindusara is sinking in health. He is lying on his bed. A Physician is examining his chest and counting his pulse. Susima's Mother, the Queen, is sitting near the feet of her husband on the bed. Radhagupta is seated on a chair.

Physician — "Your Majesty, there is nothing to worry. Strains and stress of the administration have told upon your health. The only remedy is rest - complete rest for the body and mind."

The Physician bows don and departs. Bindusara looks at Radhagupta.

Bindusara — "Radhagupta ! Can an Emperor ever know rest in life ? It is easy for the Vaidyaraj to advise rest, but difficult for the patient to follow his advice ! Perhaps the only thing a King can do is to renounce the world and go into *Sannyasa*. This is what my Father did in his wisdom."

Queen — "Aryaputra ! Without being a *sannyasi* and while remaining the Chakravarti, you too can enjoy complete rest if you so like !"

Bindusara — "How ! How can I do it ! It is impossible."

Queen — "When your revered Father abdicated the Throne, you were only 22 years old, and you took over the charge of this vast Empire. Your son, Susima, is going to be Thirty. Why not make him the Vice-regent and hand over to him the responsibility of the Empire ? While he will rule on your behalf, you shall enjoy the bliss of an well-earned rest for years to follow !"

Radhagupta looks thoughtful. Bindusara looks at him with a smiling face.

Bindusara — "The Queen has presented a nice idea. I think, it will work well."

Radhagupta — "Her Majesty the Queen's proposal is worthy of consideration. The Crown Prince may be designated as the Vice-regent at an appropriate time. At the moment there are no problems and threats facing the administration. And, we the humble servants (Sevaks) are there to look after the works of the Emperor. I should therefore pray to His Majesty to follow the advice of the Vaidyaraj and take complete rest till complete recovery from this weakness."

Radhagupta gets up, bows and don goes out.

Queen — "I have always a feeling that these ministers do not like to see my son exercising his power over them. I do not see any reason why Susima should not become the Vice-regent right now !"

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Bindusara — "Your apprehension is correct. Radhagupta and his colleagues, as I can guess are not well disposed towards the Crown Prince. But, you need not worry. Leave it to me and I shall soon make Susima my Vice-regent."

Scene 5

Night: Radhagupta's House **Radhagupta, 5 Ministers**

In Radhagupta's house in the night, he is seen engaged in a serious discussion five with five other Ministers.

Radhagupta — "Dear Colleagues ! You are all aware of the sinking health of the Emperor. The Empire needs a Vice-regent to run the affairrs of the State on behalf of the King. But, the burning question before us is — can the present Crown Prince Susima ever rise to the occasion to shoulder higher responsibilities of administration ? A Prince who thinks that he needs no advice, no guidance, no counsel ane no opinion from others can never know for himself what to do or not to do ! How can he rule an empire ?"

1st Minister — To" this Prince, we the old ministers are fools, and he is the epitome of all wisdom and intelligence."

2nd Minister — "He, in fact, would like to rule without the help of his father's ministers. He thinks, he can be his own Prime Minister"

3rd Minister — "Yes, he will be his own Prime Minister, and his brothers will form his Council of Ministers !"

4th Minister — "Even his bottle-friends and dancing girls can be in a position to advise him to rule."

5th Minister — "Mahamantriji, you are the best judge of human character. It is for you to decide if Susima can be a proper person to succeed to power !"

1st Minister — "As far as I can see, no son of the Emperor Bindusara is fit to rule as a future Emperor except one. And we all know who he is. Why not try to bring him back from Ujjayini to help his father ?"

Radhagupta — "The Crown Prince will stand on his way. And, the Emperor will not like to bring Asoka back to the Capital. That is what I guess."

Ist Minister — "Prince Asoka can himself return to Pataliputra on the plea that he has stayed outside for long."

Radhagupta — "This the Prince will never do."

Ist Minister — "In that case, why not we contrive some means to bring him back !"

2nd Minister — "Mahamantriji ! we apprehend, any time, Susima may prevail upon his father to appoint him as the Vice-regent. It is better that we work sooner

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than later to avoid a critical situation. We request you to go ahead to bring back Asoka to Pataliputra to counteract Susima.''

Radhagupta looks serious.

Scene 6

Highway — **Three Horsemen are seen on the Highway, Riding Fast Westward Towards Ujjayini**

Scene 7

Ujjayini Palace: Asoka's Apartment: Interior — **Asoka, Yasas, 3 Messengers from Radhagupta**

Three trusted messengers from Radhagupta are seen in serious discussion with Asoka. Yasas is near the Viceroy. A messenger hands over the Prime Minister's letter to the Prince. He opens it and goes through the contents.

Ist Messenger — ''Your Highness ! The Prime Minister has prayed for immediate action.''

Asoka — ''First tell me, how is the health of my revered father !''

2nd Messenger — ''The Emperor's health is sinking rapidly. He is seldom seen out of his bed-room.''

Asoka — ''I am sorry to hear this. Well, dear friends, you have come from distant Pataliputra. Do take rest for a day or two till I have considered the Prime Minister's proposal and give my reply to him.''

The three messengers get up and go out.

Asoka — ''Yasas ! the time has come to me either to act or to get ruined. Susima is trying to capture power while the Emperor remains confined to bed.''

Yasas — ''Aryaputra ! Will the Prime Minister act seriously and sincerely to remove Prince Susima from the Capital till you reach the Palace!''

Asoka — ''How can he or anybody else on earth do it?''

Yasas — ''On some great excuse !''

Asoka — ''What do you mean to say ?''

Yasas — Suppose there is a revolt in distant Taxila ! Can the Prime Minister prevail upon the Emperor to send Susima to suppress it by applying all his persuasive power ?''

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Asoka "Radhagupta can do it. But, my friend, where is the revolt in Taxila ? Can we just think of it in our dream ? And, unless there is a real and serious revolt, Radhagupta cannot persuade the Emperor to despatch Susima to suppress it !"

Yasas "If you have trust in this humble servant, would you kindly give me a chance to prove my ability ? I can raise a revolt in Taxila in no time."

Asoka (*surprised*) "Dear Friend ! Can you do it indeed ?"

Yasas (*Smiling*) "One of the easiest things in politics is to raise a revolt. Some gold, some offers, some agents and some promises — this is all that one needs to create turmoil anywhere at anytime ! This humble self can demonstrate it to your satisfaction and to serve our need."

Asoka and Yasas talk in whispers for some time.

Sene 8

Highway Westward **100 Cavaliers**

Yasas with a hundred horsemen is seen riding westward in disguise as merchants. They have loaded bags on their horseback.

Scene 9

Highway Eastward **Messengers on Horse**

The three messengers of Radahagupta who came to Ujjayini are seen riding fast eastward on return journey to Pataliputra.

Scene 10

Night:Taxila Governor's House **Yasas, Governor**

In the night Yasas is seen with the Mauryan Amatya of Taxila inside his private apartment. Yasas presents his token of identity to the Amatya.

Yasas "Prince Asoka has sent me to you in absolute trust that you are his man."

Amatya "Dear Friend ! I owe this office of the Amatya of Taxila to Prince Asoka who was good and kind enough to appoint me to this high position after suppressing the Taxilan revolt. I am ready to give my life for him if it helps him."

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Yasas "Have you ever thought of what your benefactor Asoka is going to be!"

The Amatya presents a blank look.

Yasas "The Emperor is very very sick. He may pass away anytime. The Ministers and Generals are all united as one person to raise Prince Asoka to the Throne and to make him the Emperor. Their strategy is to remove Susima from Pataliputra at once. This can be done only by raising a false revolt in Taxila !"

Amatya "I get it. I am at your disposal to serve the cause of our future emperor under your direction."

Scene 11

Flash Scenes of Taxilan Revolt — Crowds, Fires, Plunder Violence.

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Episode Thirteen

Commentary

When the news of the second Taxilan revolt reached the ailing Bindusara, he thought of sending Prince Asoka from Ujjayini to suppress the uprising. But, Radhagupta managed to send the Crown Prince Susima to Taxila where he failed to achieve success.

Scene 1

Night: Taxila

Flash scenes of the Taxilan revolt. The agents of Yasas capture some Mauryan Officers as prisoners. Scenes of destruction, plunder and fires follow.

Scene 2

Bindusara's Apartment

Bindusara , Radhagupta, Guards, Taxilan Messenger

Emperor Bindusara is resting on a couch. Radhagupta is sitting on a chair near the Emperor's bed. They are discussing about Susima's new appointment as the Vice-regent.

Radhagupta — "Maharajadhiraj, the Astrologers have fixed the date for the auspicious ceremony of Prince Susima's elevation to the position off Vice-regent- on the fullmoon day of Baisakh which is getting nearer."

Bindusara — "Make the ceremony as pompous as possible to impress upon the Court and the people that even if their Emperor is unwell, their Empire is safe in hands of his successor."

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A Guard appears and bows .

Guard — "Your Majesty, a messenger from the Chief Amatya of Taxila prays for an immediate interview !"

Radhagupta (*expressing surprise*) — "Messenger from Taxila ? Bring him in."

The Guard goes out and brings the messenger in. He bows and hands over his insignia of recognition to the Prime Minister and the message in sealed cover.

Messenger — "Your Majesty ! The Chief Amatya has despatched me to inform that a serious revolt has suddenly broken out in the city of Taxila and it is spreading rapidly to the other areas on the frontiers. He has prayed for immediate despatch of an army under a determined leader."

Radhagupta — "A determined leader ! What does the Chief Amatya mean?

Does he mean the Senapati of the Mauryan Army?

Messenger — "Mahamantriji ! The Chief Amatya prays that the first Taxilan revolt was suppressed by Prince Asoka most ruthlessly and most successfully. If an Army goes under Prince Asoka this time also, or, under the leadership of any other Prince of the Mauryan House, this second Taxilan revolt will collapse, out of people's fear of a similar drastic action."

Bindusara looks worried and anxious. In a sudden outburst of temper, he sits erect and says:

Bindusara — "No. No Prince of my House need go there this time when I am alive. Let the Taxilans taste this time what their Emperor can do to them. I shall reduce the city to dust and annihilate the entire population of that ancient place. I shall establish there the peace of the Graveyard."

Bindusara starts coughing profusely after his excited pronouncement.

Radhagupta — "I pray to you to calm down. I shall myself go to Taxila with the Crown Prince to enact the same deed as you propose to do. The wicked Taxilans should perish for ever."

Bindusara — "Why should the Crown Prince or the Prime Minister go when their Emperor is alive ? It is my Empire, and it is my solemn task to restore peace there or anywhere."

Radhagupta (*to the messenger*) — "Go back to the Chief Amatya to assure him that the Emperor will take all necessary measures forthwith. Let the Mauryan Officers there try their best to contain the unrest till our Army arrives."

The messenger bows goes out.

Radhagupta — "Your Majesty ! You have no reason to feel anxious. The revolt can be dealt with firmly and forthwith. The Crown Prince Susima can put it

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down more ruthlessly than Asoka earlier. In your present state of health, it will be inadvisable for Your Majesty to go.''

Bindusara — ''No. Susima need to go. Let Asoka go there once again. Send an express order to him to proceed from Ujjayini towards Taxila with his army. His earlier experience will be of great advantage to him.''

Bindusara coughs wildly as if by a violent attack of chest pain.

Radhagupta — ''Kindly leave the matter to me.''

Scene 3

Evening: Pleasure Farden — **Susima, Sudatta, Sugatra, 3 Dancing Girls, Radhagupta**

Prince Susima and his two brothers are in a jovial mood. They are playing with three of their girl friends amoral games of hide and seek. After the game, they sit down on grass and enjoy their talk.

Sudatta (*to girls*) — ''Three days are only left for the great occasion when Prince Susima becomes the Vice-regent. In other words, he becomes the *de facto* Emperor of Bharat. That night we must enjoy a carnival as never enjoyed before. Collect at least a hundred select beauties to take part in our night of enjoyment.''

Sugatra — ''And, you three should be our partners in the carnival.''

The Girls present their dazzling looks and smile. But, suddenly, they all feel surprised to see the Prime Minister heading towards them. The Girls quickly run away to hide themselves. The Princes stand up to receive Radhagupta. The Prime Minister and the Princes take their seats on stone chairs in the garden.

Susima (*smiling*) — ''Mahamantri, I hope, all arrangements are being made for the celebration ! Are all the Viceroys and subordinate Chiefs coming from all parts of the Empire to swear allegience to me as their Vice-regent ? Is Asoka coming from Ujjayini ?''

Radhagupta (*looking sad*) — ''Yuvaraj, the ceremony stands upset. We have just received the reports about the outbreak of a serious revolt in Taxila. The Emperor is much distressed. He wants to go there himself to suppress it. But, as you know, he is advised not to leave even his bed. I ran to you to consult — what should we do about the ceremony as well as regarding the revolt !''

Susima — ''Revolt in Taxila ! Let the Senapati go to put it down while our celebration goes on as usual and as arranged.''

Radhagupta — ''I offered to go myself with the Senapati and the Army. But the Emperor wants to send Prince Asoka from Ujjayini the Taxila.''

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Sudatta — "That is an excellent decision."

Radhagupta — "The Emperor's decision is no doubt wise. I thought over it. But on second thoughts, I have developed my doubts and fears. That is why I rushed to you for consultation."

Susima (*surprised*) — "Doubts and Fears ! What for !"

Radhagupta (*looking grave*) — "To speak the truth, I do not want that Asoka should go to Taxila for the second time to achieve a success. If you permit to say, I may give my reasons."

Susima — "Please do. Your wisdom may prompt you to speak out what is good or bad."

Radhagupta — "If Asoka goes to Taxila, it will carry deeper implications. The millions of the subjects of Magadh will come to believe that Prince Asoka is the only capable Prince among all the sons of the sick Emperor. The Mauryan Officers, Generals, Courtiers and the Priests will come to the same conclusion. This will prove ominous for the future. We knowhow ambitious is that Prince. He can be dare-devil to cut his path to the Throne of Magadh. He will exploit his popularity with the people and the soldiers to his best advantage. With a big Army under him for his Taxilan campaign, and as the Viceroy of Avanti, he may prove himself something of a danger to the future of the Crown Prince. This is my apprehension."

The Princes look sad and serious."

Radhagupta — "I shall go to the Emperor to plead that I should go myself as the Prime Minister to face the revolt which may not be of a serious character. I have reports that Greek hands are not behind the unrest as last time. I am confident that I can crush the revolt with ease. Neither the ailing Emperor nor Prince Asoka go to Taxila if Radhagupta is ready to face the situation."

Susima — "How do you feel so confident of success ?"

Radhagupta — "I have my own independent report from the spies that the revolt is of a minor character. The Greek Kings are now fighting among themselves and cannot help the rebels. We have a strong force in Taxila unlike the time of the previous revolt. Besides this, I have also a duty to my Emperor. He is still thinking of going to Taxila himself which will put us all to shame. Similarly, I have a duty to the Crown Prince. I cannot see Asoka marching ahead to glory at the cost of his elder brother. The people will form a poor impression of the Crown Prince if the sick Emperor goes to suppress the revolt. It is for this that I want to lead the Army to Taxila. Nobody will feel anything if the Prime Minister goes."

Sudatta — "If the Emperor need not go, and Prince Asoka should not go, then, in that case, I am ready to go so that my brother the Crown Prince celebrates his elevation to the new rank."

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Radhagupta — "Kumar Sudatta, you are brave indeed. If you go to Taxila, all problems are solved. You can take the Senapati and as big an army as you like."

Susima — "Mahamantri ! I offer a better solution. I cannot see my dear Father go when he is sick. I cannot see that proud fellow Asoka go to Taxila to gain further laurels as well as to become a potential threat to my future. If my younger brother Sudatta or Sugatra goes, people may feel that the Crown Prince Susima is unwilling to take grave risks. No, I should not allow all these things to happen. I must, therefore, go to Taxila myself."

Radhagupta — "May God shower His blessings on our brave and wise Crown Prince. Perhaps it is the desire of the Heavens that Prince Susima goes to Taxila. The victory being certain, the people of Bharat will find in Prince Susima a mighty monarch of the future, a brave warrior and hero, a glorious Maurya like Chakravarti Chandragupta. All my problems are now solved."

Susima (*looking proud*) — "Mahamantriji, please go to the Emperor to obtain his permission for me to go. Let the ceremony wait till I come back victorious."

Radhagupta — "Kumara Yuvaraj ! This is beyond my ability. The Emperor will never agree to my request to send his dear Crown Prince and the Heir Apparent to far-away Taxila. His decision still stands that either he himself or Prince Asoka will lead this campaign. He will reject my prayer to send you.But if you yourself go and plead that you as the Crown Prince have a responsibility to discharge, he may agree. Let the Emperor be told that your mission to Taxila is a necessity in order that the world should know that the first son of Emperor Bindusara Amitraghata is as worthy as his heroi` father."

Scene 4

Night: Bindusara's Bedroom **Bindusara, Queen, Susima**

The sick Emperor is lying on his bed. Susima's mother is sitting at his feet. Susima is seen standing. It is night. The Emperor looks very pale. Dim lights show the faces of the King, the Queen and the Prince in shade and darkness.

Susima — "*Pitaji* ! Is the Crown Prince dead that the Emperor thinks of going to Taxila himself to suppress the revolt ?"

Bindusara (*in faint voice*) — "No, I am not going. I am sending Asoka to Taxila."

Susima — "Pitaji ! Is it your pleasure to give the laurels of honour to your second son again and again overlooking your first son ! What would the subjects think of me — a coward, a timid fellow, an unworthy Prince ?"

Queen — "Susima, do not speak like this. It is your father's deep affection for you which prevents him from sending you to any distant place or to any dangerous situation. You must realise his concern for your safety and well-being. Why do you feel the other way ?"

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Susima — "Mother, I know how deep is my revered father's love for me. But I must speak at the same time that Asoka is taking advantage of that love by gaining recognition as a hero. Am I not more heroic than he ?"

Bindusara (*lovingly*) — "Dear son, am I not going to acknowledge your worth by making you the Vice-regent in next three days ?"

Susima — "Pitaji, I pray not to do it now. People will laugh at me that while Taxila is burning, Susima is celebrating in Pataliputra ! The Courtiers, the Officers and the Generals will form a very poor opinion of me."

Bindusara — "What do you propose ?"

Susima — "I have come to beg for your order to me to proceed to Taxila."

Bindusara — "No. This order I shall never give. I cannot send my first son and the Heir Apparent away from me when I am unwell. I cannot send you to face danger at a distant place involving great many risks."

Susima — "Pitaji, In other words you say that I am unfit to succeed you as the Emperor because I am unfit to face grave dangers ! When the time comes, should I not be your worthy successr to face greater dangers — supposing—that the stubborn Kalingans invade Magadh in the south or the hostile Greeks take up arms in the West ! I beseech, Kindly give me this chance to prove to the world that the son of Amitraghata can also be a second Amitraghata."

Queen — "Oh dear ! Do not feel like this when your father needs your presence near him. When he recovers, he will send you to bigger missions. For the time, forget Taxila. Let Asoka go there."

Susima (*agitated*) — "Maa ! You too want to see Asoka winning victory, glory and honour at my cost ? Last time, I was not allowed to go. This time too I am denied the honour. I cannot tolerate it any more that the subjects and soldiers will adore Asoka as a hero, and not Susima !"

Bindusara observes Susima's emotional conduct with penetrating eyes.

Bindusara — "Well, go to the Prime Minister and tell him to reverse my order to send Asoka. Instead, tell him that I have ordered you to go. I shall myself tell him that you insisted to go for a heroic role as a dutiful Crown Prince. Take with you the Senapati and a large Army."

Susima — "Pitaji, Your blessings are enough for me to win victory. I do not want that the Senapati would accompany me. I do not want him to share credit with me. I shall win and win alone."

Susima bows and goes out while the Emperor looks at him with tearful eyes.

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Scene 5

Highway

Prince Susima in a chariot is driving out of Patiliputra, followed by a large cavalry force,

Scene 6

Taxila

Scenes of revolt. Crowds are seen in destructive action in several streets of Taxila. Yasas and his followers are seen among the rebels in disguise. Scenes of fire in night.

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Scene 7

Nigh: Taxila Castle: Interior **Yasas, Chief Amatya, Conspirators**

Inside a Castle, in dense darkness, Yasas is discussing with the Mauryan Chief Amatyas and his associates about the strategy of their action. Dim lights show their faces under covers.

Yasas — "Message from Pataliputra has reached me. Prince Susima is coming to suppress the so called revolt. Our original plan is working in perfect precision. We have now to decide how to deceive and misguide that foolish Prince."

Chief Amatya — "What does the message say about the Emperor's condition ?"

Yasas — "Grave, it is grave ! God only knows the days or moments left for the dying King."

An Amatya — "We shall be ready to receive Susima with due devotion, We shall tell him that we are fighting to the best of our ability."

Yasas — "Of course ! You must pretend your absolute loyalty as well as show your determination to win victory for him. But, your real work should be to misdirect him to send his soldiers to wrong places. His army must waste its time andd energy in tracing out the non-existent rebel forces in far and inaccessible mountains."

Chief Amatya — "And, also well shall attack his forces when they come to believe after their searches that the rebels are nowhere."

Yasas — "Very correct. Out chief objective is to hold up Susima in Taxila for as long as possible. We shall wait till Asoka reaches the Capital and takes possession of the Palace and the Throne."

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Chief Amatya "We have to act as actors so that the Prince does not suspect us. But this can be done only for a short time, not for a longer period."

Yasas "No, we have to continue to act till the curtain falls on Prince Susima's career. Be cautious therefore that he does not suspect any one of you. Do remember that he is a most cruel man. If he suspects any one of you, he will massacre all of you."

The a matyas show signs of nervousness.

Yasas "Do not tremble dear friends. Big games have grave risks. While heroes run the risk to gain rewards, cowards run away from risks to invite their doom. Friends, you have no reason to tremble in fear. Susima is a monster of cruelty, but he has no brain to distinguish between a friend and a foe. If you play your part well, he wil never suspect you even for years. If he suspects for one reason or the other, the safest course for you is to go underground. He can never find you and you should have no danger from him. Friends ! Be confident that your success will be Asoka's success. Asoka's victory will be your victory. Rewards await you from the new Emperor which you rightly deserve."

They talk in whispers for some time.

Scene 8

Gate of Taxila **Susima, Troops, Chief Amatya, Mauryan Officers and Soldiers**

Susima's chariot reaches the Gate of Taxila followed by cavalry forces. The Chief Amatya and his men receive the Prince with honour.

Susima "Do the rebels and the citizens of Taxila know that I am coming?"

Chief Amatya "Your Highness ! Not only that they know of your coming, but that in their mortal fear of the Crown Prince they have flield to their mountain hideouts. Even the women and children have fled. It is only in nights that they reappear to sustain their rebellion."

Susima "Wherever they may be hiding, I shall find them out. Whenever they surface, my soldiers will receive them with naked swords."

Chief Amatya "Your Majesty ! I pray for your stay in the Palace where Prince Asoka stayed during his days here."

Susima's a chariot rolls inside the Gate. Soliders and others follow. Drums and trumpets play martial music.

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Episode Thirteen

Scene 9

Night: Taxila Palace: Interior **Susima, His 3 Generals Chief Amatya, 3 Amatyas**

Susima is on Throne. The Chief Amatya spreads on a table the Map of Taxila and the Frontiers. Susima observes as the Chief Amatya explains.

Chief Amatya — "We are not yet sure if foreign agents are with the rebels. Yet, the strength of the rebel force is fairly large. Their hideouts are located in these mountain pockets."

He shows some places on the map.

Susima (*to his generals*) — "Each one of you with your forces can spread out to these places tomor row night and fall upon them at the daybreak."

1st General — "Your Honour ! Some of these places are far outside Taxila. They are in dense forests. In my opinion, we first comb the whole city of Taxila to flush out the rebels and destroy them. This operation will take hardly a week. Thereafter, we may spread out to their hideouts."

2nd General — "I agree with my comrade. This operation will break the morale of the enemy. The roots are here. The tree will dry out when we destory the roots."

Chief Amatya — "With the report of the coming of the Crown Prince, most rebel leaders with their forces have fled to the forests. Unless they are hounded out and despatched to hell, it will take a long long time to crush the revolt. They will continue to come out at their sweet will and attack our forces at their pleasure."

Susima — "I agree with the Chief Amatya. As we have a big Army, we better attack the enemy where they have concentrated their forces. Distance is no difficulty. Spread out as I say to all these places of their hiding."

He moves his finger on the map.

Scene 10

Susima's soliders are spreading out into mountains on horse.

Scene 11

Flash scenes of night attacks on soldiers by Yasas and his men.

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Episode Fourteen

Commentary

Reports of Prince Susima's failure in Taxila cause deep anxiety in the mind of Bindusara. His health declines suddenly. Suspecting Court intrigues against Susima, he decides to summon the Crown Prince back to Pataliputra. On the other hand, apprehending the Emperor's imminent death, Radhagupta and his supporters try to bring back Asoka to the Capital before the arrival of Susima.

Scene 1

Taxila Palace — **Susima, Chief Amatya, 3 Generals, Amatyas, Spy**

Prince Susima is in high temper. He is deeply worried for his failure to suppress the Revolt. He brings charge against the Amatyas for their wrong information. He is walking to and fro in excitement while others are seated.

Susima — "Tell me, you Mauryan Amatyas, what report shall I send to the Emperor ? Should I ask him to come himself to suppress the revolt ? Should I confess that I have failed ?"

Chief Amatya — "We pray for a little more time. We feel certain to apprehend the rebel leaders before it is too late "

Susima — "Will you shut up ! Did you not advise me to send forces to distant mountains ? Did you not say that the rebels have built up their strong holds in the dense forests ? Now, my Gererals are seated before you. They will tell you what has happened to their operations !"

He looks at a General.

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1st General — "Your Honour ! We went far inside the inaccesible places. We braved the mountains and forests. We found no trace of rebel centers at the places where the Amatyas wanted us to go. Our soldiers are wasting their time and energy. They are demoralised. Enemies fall upon them in nights, but they go out only from the city of Taxila."

2nd General — 'We are convinced that the enemy hideouts are in Taxila itself, not outside, Had we combed the city first, our work would have been over by now !"

3rd General — "Your Highness ! Time is running out. We pray for orders to bring back the forces from outside. It is needless to keep them in places where there are no rebels. Our soldiers face untold hardship and die of fatigue and fever !"

Susima looks angrily towards the Chief Amatya and others.

Susima — "What answers have you to give against these allegations ! Tell me, why did you advise me to send the army outside Taxila ?"

Chief Amatya — "Your Honour, I still believe that the enemy centers are located in the Hindukush ranges. Our forces have not yet gone there !"

1st General — "Have you any clear evidence of it, or, you are acting on imagination ? Can we accept your advice to send armies to Hindukush when our soldiers die every night in Taxila ?"

A Mauryan Spy enters. Amatyas look apprehensive and fearful. Susima sits down and looks to the Spy.

Susima — "Here is my man, my officer who has come with his spies from Patali-putra to ascertain the correct position ! Tell me, what information have you gathered from your men ?"

Spy — "Kumara Rajan ! My people have seen a man named Yasas among the Rebel Leaders of Taxila. This man is a brave fighter. But he does not belong to Taxila. He comes from Ujjayini !"

Susima — "What ! From Ujjayini ? What does he do there ? Why has he come here ?"

Spy — "Yasas works as a chief personnel guard of Prince Asoka in the Vice-roy's Palace in Ujjayini."

Susima (*excited*) — "What do you say ?"

Spy — "This man is seen every night as an active leader of the local rebels. And, this man has also his own band of fighters."

Susima (*to Amatyas*) — "You Amatyas ! Have your spies given you any information about this man ?"

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Amatyas (*in unison*) "No, we have no such information from our local spies !"

Susima (*furious*) "No information ! My men from Magadha who arrived three days ago could know of Yasas, while your men could not know of him in 90 days? You and your men deserve to be beheaded. Speak the truth ! Are some of you in league with that man from Ujjayini ? Should I believe that sinister hands are behind this revolt ?"

Chief Amatya (*Mortally Fearful*) "I pray for a day more to ascertain all facts about this Yasas !"

Susima "I need no further information from your side ! I give you a day's time to capture that man. If you fail to do it, your heads will roll on the streets of Taxila."

Susima looks to the Generals.

Susima "I order, withdraw your men from the mountains. Set them to wipe out the rebels in Taxila with all force. Catch everyone whom you suspect as a man from outside."

Scene 2

Night:Hideout **Chief Amatya, Amatyas, Susima's Generals and Soldiers**

The fearful Amatyas are meeting in the dead of the night inside a secret hideout.

Chief Amatya "Friends, the game is over. It is time that we go into hiding before it is dawn. The Spies from Pataliputra will soon know of our complicity. If we do not escape to safety right now, our heads will be no more on our shoulders by tomorrow."

An Amatya "I have already informed Yasas that his presence in Taxila is known to Susima. He knows what to do or where to go."

Before the Amatyas disperse, Susima's soldiers fall upon them in lightening speed under the command of a General.

General "So, Gentlemen ! You are the leaders of the Revolt ! Well, your Revolt is now over. Get ready for Hell."

A brief encanter continues. Some Amatyas are put in chains. Two of them escape.

Scene 3

Flash Scene of a night battle between Yasas's soldiers and Susima's forces. A number of Susima's men die. Yasas escapes with his men in darkness.

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Scene 4

Radhagupta's House : Interior **Radhagupta, Spy from Taxila**

A Spy of the Emperor returns from Taxila and meets the Prime Minister. Radhagupta listens to him attentively,

Spy — "Mahamantriji ! The crown Prince is in great trouble in Taxila. He has achieved no success so far. He sent his army far outside the city to destroy the enemy hideouts and concentrations. But the armies have achieved no result."

Radhagupta — "Did you meet the Emperor first before meeting me ?"

Spy — "Yes of course. That was the imperial order to me to bring the news directly to the Emperor."

Radhagupta — "You should not have done so. The Emperor is gravely ill."

Spy — "I am sorry. I beg for forgiveness. I was not aware of His Majesty's deteriorating condition."

The Spy bows and leaves.

Scene 5

Bindusara's Bedroom **Bindusara Susima's Mother Radhagupta, Two Vaidyas**

Bindusara is lying in a critical condition on his sick-bed. Susima's Mother is attending upon him. Radhagupta is sitting on a chair. The Chief Vaidya is counting pulse of the Emperor. The other Vaidya is administering medicine.

Bindusara (*Feeble Voice*) — "Mahamantriji, I have bad news from Taxila. I am anxious about Susima's well-being. I told you not to send him there."

Radhagupta — "Your Majesty, I also requested him not to go. But he was determined in his decision to go."

Bindusara — "It is not too late. Send my order to the Crown Prince to come back forthwith. Also send orders to Asoka to go to Taxila at once and suppress the Revolt as ruthlessly as he did it last time."

Radhagupta — "Yes, Your Majesty !"

The Vaidyas go out. Susima's Mother follows them.

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Scene 6

Same: Exterior **Susima's Mother, 2 Vaidyas**

Susima's Mother is in tears. The Vaidyas look sad.

Queen "Vaidyaraj ! Have mercy on me. Please tell me the truth. This is no time to hide anything from me. Is my husband's condition grave ?"

Vaidyaraj "Maharani ! Everything now rests with the God. It is God's mercy alone which can save the life of the Emperor. We are mere instruments of the Almighty. But, we have to pray to you to keep yourself well composed. If you look sad, your face will unnerve the patient. If you smile and look happy, the patient will be reassured of recovery. Let not any sick man see unhappy faces of his near and dear ones. And, you are the Queen and the wife.!"

The Queen goes inside. Radhagupta comes out.

Radhagupta "Vaidyaraj ! You may speak anything to the Queen to comfort her. But you know my position as the Prime Minister. At this grave hour of the King's health, I must know the truth and nothing but the truth about his condition."

Vaidyaraj (*With Tears*) "Mahamantriji ! By God's Grace, the Emperor may survive for some days at the most. He may overcome Death too if the Gods want him to live. But, as for us, we have lost the hope. The last moment of his life may not be very far from his breath."

Radhagupta "I am shocked to my depth. My prayer to you at this dark moment is that you should do your best to keep him alive."

They wipe their tears and move away.

Scene 7

Same: Interior **Bindusara, Susima's Mother**

Susima's Mother is alone with the Emperor. She tries to hide her emotion and presents a smiling face.

Queen "Pati Deva ! The Vaidyas are fully confident that within a few days the fever will disappear from your body. I pray, kindly forget of Taxila."

Bindusara "I am not thinking of Taxila. I am thinking of our dear son, Susima."

Queen "Oh Dear ! The Prime Minister has received your order to summon him back forthwith. He may reach Pataliputra any time."

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Bindusara (*in feeble voice*) "Guru Chanakya told me in my youth to suspect that man the most to whom you trust the most. I do not know why, but my mind prompts me to suspect Radhagupta ! He knows of my grave illness. Yet he does not show any serious will to bring back Susima. Who can say what he thinks!"

Queen "I too feel in that way. If you like, I may send my trusted servants to Taxila with my letter about your illness. Susima can at once return. He cannot delay by a day if he comes to know that his father is unwell."

Bindusara "Do it today. If your men can bring Susima earlier than Radhagupta's men, I shall sack him from his office on grounds of inefficiency."

Bindusara gets agitated. He feels extreme pain in his chest. The Queen becomes nervous. She closes her eyes and prays. Bindusara breathes faster.

Scene 8

Night: Radhagupta's House: Exterior **Tishya Rakshita (Aged 18), A Man on Horse**

Night is dark. A horseman halts at the gate of the Prime Minister's House with a veiled girl sitting behind him. The Girl gets down and proceeds towards the door. She pulls a string. The Door opens. She enters inside.

Scene 9

Same: Interior **Radhagupta, Tishya (aged 18)**

Inside his closed room Radhgupta receivestt the veiled Girl. She removes her veil. She is impressively beautiful. Her eyes look dazzling. She bows at the feet of the Prime Minister and gets up. Radhagupta observes her face and body most attentively. Radhgupta sits down on a couch. Tishya Rakshita sits down on ground.

Radhagupta "So, you are Tishya Rakshita, the precious lady of many tales ! Your Courtier-father says that you are the bravest of the brave girls of Patali-putra. You can cross the Ganga, run up a hill, face tigers, challenge warriors, outwit ministers, charm the snakes, trick intelligent persons, jump through enemy circles, and even vanish from sight like a bird. Are these attributes real ?"

Radhagupta smiles.

Tishya "Mahamantriji ! as you know, my father does not tell lies. So, if these are his words, they may be true. But , if these are your words, they seem to me as the ropes of a net to trap me in. Praises are showered to serve some purpose. I am proud to hear these praises from a sage-like Prime

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Minister, and am ready to serve the purpose for which the words are meant.''

Radhgupta ''Your reaction to my praise pleases me greatly. But, believe me, I heard about you from your father. I am a little puzzled, how such a little pretty creature is really capable of working wonders !''

Tishya ''Mahamantriji ! You have certainly asked me to come not for showering words on me, but for pressing me to some wondorous work. I have come prepared for the Test-an examination that may open up a ladder for me to rise step by step to an earthly paradise.''

Radhgupta '' Dear Girl ! God forbid ! But, suppose you fail in the Test ! Do you realise that the ladders may not open up for a paradise, but for an abyss of ruins.''

Tishya ''For me, it is the game that matters, neither victory nor defeat. If I succeed, I rise to my ambitions. If I fail, I shall welcome disaster. After all, one is born to die some day. If I fear death, I am a coward. If I welcome death while fighting bravely on my way to success, it is worth dying such a death.''

Radhagupta ''Tishya, I am terribly impressed by your words. I have invited you to perform a wonder. I feel sure, you can do it,''

Radhgupta takes Tishya to a corner and talk to her in whispers. He presents a necklace to her with a big locket which contains his insignia. Tishya puts it around her neck.

Radhagupta ''Have my blessings and the blessings of all the gods and goddesses. It is a cause for which we have to work together the cause of the Magadhan Empire, the Mauryan Dynasty, and the myriads of people. Go undetected, apply the magic of your intelligence, and convince the Prince to reach Pataliputra without a moment's delay.''

Tishya ''My only fear is ...''

Radhagupta ''Your only fear ! What is that?''

Tishya ''I fear that Buddhist wife of the Prince--Vidisa Devi Sakya Kumari.''

Radhagupta ''Will you then acknowledge your defeat before her?''

Tishya (*Looking Grave*) ''Perhaps not. Tishya Rakshita can defeat a Vidisa Devi if it comes to a contest of real life.''

Radhagupta ''Go ahead, my dear Tishya, go ahead.''

She bows down. Radhagupta places his palm on her head to bless.

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Scene 10

Highway **Tishya, 5 Escorts**

Tishya Rakshita, disguised as a young merchant--prince is riding a big horse in top speed. Her five escorts, also looking like merchants, are riding behind her.

Scene 11

Highway:Westward **Two Cavaliers**

Two Cavaliers are riding fast in westward direction.

Ist Cavalier "The Queen has assured me that if I can bring back Prince Susima to Pataliputra within a fortnight, she will offer me a necklace of diamonds. Do you know, how much is the value of a single diamond!"

2nd Cavalier "She has also promised me a lump of gems and pearls. Let us ride as fast as possible. Let us forget rest and sleep."

Ist Cavalier "I have no doubt, the Prince also will reward us heavily when we reach Taxila."

They whip the horses and ride away.

Scene 12

Bindusara's Bedroom **Bindusara, Radhagupta, A General**

Bindusara is lying in a critical condition. He is almost speechless. Radhagupta is sitting on a chair silently, looking at the face of Bindusara whose eyes are closed. The Emperor opens his eyes and looks towards Radhagupta.

Bindusara "Radhagupta ! You are Brahmin. You know what is a sin. You also know what a curse is. No sin is greater than betrayal. No betrayal is greater than the betrayal of your master. You can consult your conscience if you are betraying your master who trusts in your virtues. As a Prime Minister you deny your dying monarch to see the Heir Apparent and Successor to his throne ! As a man, you prevent a dying father to see his dear son ! Think within yourself if I am wrong ! I am speaking this to you, to nobody else !"

Radhagupta turns pale and white.

Radhagupta "Your Majesty !..."

Bindusara "I need no answer. Days have passed since I ordered you to bring

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Susima back ! I have counted days. It is too late. He has not come.''

Bindusara waves his hand indicating Radhagupta to go. As the Prime Minister goes out, the Senapati comes in. Bindusara look at him.

Bindusara ''My moments are numbered. Send the fastest horseman to Taxila to tell Susima that if he wants to see his father alive, he must take to horse the moment he gets this message. Dear Senapati, I believe, I can trust you fully. Please go to carry out my order.''

The Senapati bows and goes out.

Scene 13

Evening:Siva Temple:Interior **Radhagupta**

The sun is setting on the western horizon. The water of Ganga looks red with the rays of the setting sun. Radhagupta is standing alone before the Image of Siva inside a small Temple on the bank of the Ganga. It is a lonely and quiet place. Radhagupta folds his hands and lowers down his head and offers his prayer. At the end of the prayer, he speaks to himself.

Radhagupta ''Oh Siva, the Supreme Being, the Almighty God ! Show me the light in this hour of darkness ! Let a thunder fall on my head if I am doing a sinful act ! Let a snake descend from Your pedestal to bite me to death. Let a fatal disease strike me down to endless suffering.

Oh Siva, to me my country is greater than my King. My duty is holier than my loyalty. Give me the strength of mind, Oh God, to face the danger bravely. Forgive me, Oh God, if I have betrayed my Master for the sake of his Dynasty. Forgive me for my sin to have betrayed a father for the sake of everyone's motherland. The King may love his eldest son and desire to see him as his successor on the throne. But, the Empire of Magadh needs his worthiest son on throne to protect the country and its people.

Give me strength, Oh God, to serve this Land of Bharat. Let my work justify my sins as a man. Let me work as a Mahamantri.''

Clouds roar on the sky and darkness descends.

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Episode Fifteen

Commentary

Court politics come to its climax as Emperor Bindusara approaches his death. Tishya Rakshita proceeds to Ujjayini to inform Prince Asoka about the Emperor's condition. Asoka decides to reach Pataliputra before Susima comes from Taxila.

Scene 1

Night: Palace Gate:Ujjayani **Tishya, Escorts, Guards**

Just after midnight, Tishya and her five escorts get down before the gate of the Viceregal Palace at Ujjayini. Tishya alone advances towards the Guards at the Gate.

Guard — "Stop there you strangers, stop !"

Tishya comes near to the Guards.

Tishya (*changing her dress of a boy*) — "Don't you see I am a tender girl !"

Guard — "Clear out quickly or else I spear you to death !"

Tishya — "Do you suspect me when I am unarmed ! I have come to see the Viceroy without a moment's delay. Please take me in. It is most urgent !"

Guard — "How do you dare to meet the Viceroy in this dead of the night ? Are you insane ? If you are not, come, come back in the morning."

Tishya — "If I wait till the morning, me head and your heads will not be there on our shoulders. Go inside and inform your chief that a messenger from Pataliputra wants to see the Viceroy at once."

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The Guards are surprised. Three of them go inside the gate and come back.

Guard "You are going at your own risk. If the Viceroy is awakened for no serious reason, you may see him but not the dawn."

The Guards allow Tishya to go alone.

Scene 2

Night: Courtyard **Tishya, Women Guards**

Inside the spacious courtyard facing the Viceroy's bedroom several women bodyguards surround Tishya Rakshita. One of them go to the verandah of the bedroom and pulls a string.

Scene 3

Night:Asoka's Bedroom:Interior **Asoka, Devi**

It is past midnight. Asoka and Devi are asleep. An earthen lamp on a stand emits faint light. A bell at the door rings. Devi gets up. She finds her husband in deep sleep. She moves his body with a mild touch.

Devi "Oh dear ! I have heard the bell ringing. May be something urgent."

Asoka springs up from bed. He goes to the door to see through the mystery hole, and finds the faces of some women guards.

Scene 4

Exterior **Asoka, Women Guards**

Asoka comes out. The Women guards bow down.

Chief Guard "A Girl from Pataliputra seeks interview at once. We have searched her person. She stands in the Courtyard."

She points her finger at the girl. Asoka steps down from the verandah and goes to the Courtyard.

Scene 5

Courtyard **Asoka, Tishya Rakshita**

Asoka comes to Tishya Rakshita. The women guards withdraw to a distance. Tishya removes

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the veil from her face. She bows down and lifts her face upright to look to the Prince. The moon is at its meridian. Tishya's face looks beautiful and her eyes enchanting. Asoka fixes his eyes on her looks.

Tishya "Aryaputra ! My identity lies not in my face or eyes, but in this ...."

She opens her bodice partly, takes out the locket which hangs around a chain on her neck, and holds it before the eyes of Asoka. Asoka looks at the locket for a few moments.

Asoka "Dear Girl ! Could you not wait till the morning instead of coming at this unusual hour of the night ?"

Tishya "I preferred this nocturnal visit to disturb my Prince because, Half a Night lost in Sleep might see a Throne lost for ever."

Asoka "I am thrilled at your words. But explain to me what you mean. Come near to my apartment."

Asoka leads Tishya towards the verandah. He sits down on a chair and offers Tishya to sit down.

Scene 6

Verandah **Asoka, Tishya**

Asoka and Tishya talk face to face, seated on gorgeous chairs.

Tishya "May God save our gracious Emperor, Chakravarti Amitraghata. But, who knows, his abode by now might have been the Heaven !"

Asoka (*surprised*) "Oh my God ! Oh my Father !"

Tishya "The Prime Minister asks you to reach Pataliputra without a moment's delay. A moment lost may see everything lost. The a day delayed may be too late. the Throne cannot fall vacant. dying Emperor has sent urgent summons to Prince Susima to reach Pataliputra with his army. May be, the Crown Prince is already on his way to the Capital."

Asoka "Already on his way ?"

Tishya "Yes, Aryaputra, he may be on his way. But, it is the distance that counts. He has to come from the farthest end of the Empire. You have to proceed from the mid--point of the Empire. He who starts first wins the race. He who is nearer to the goal has the chance to reach it earlier. He who slows down his speed, loses the race."

Asoka "What does the Prime Minister propose ?"

Tishya "He wants you to reach Pataliputra before Susima arrives. Most Minis-

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ters are with you. Most Generals will be with the Prince who is able to capture the Throne first. Most soldiers will do the same. And, most people will follow what the Ministers and Generals and soldiers do.''

Asoka gets submerged in deep though. Tishya observes his face and speaks:

Tishya ''Aryaputra ! You known as the ablest of the Princes, most daring, most adventurous, most heroic and most courageous. For you, there is no time to think. The Supreme moment for action has come. You are just to get up and go. This is the call of the hour. I am too humble to advise, too ordinary to talk, and too simple to rouse you to action !''

Asoka ''No, my dear lady ! No. You seem to be a source of inspiration in this moment of moments in the life of this Prince !''

Asoka stands up.

Scene 7

Interior **Devi**

As Asoka and Tishya are talking outside the room on the verandah, Devi is listening to their words from inside the bedroom and observing their movements through the mystery opening on the door. Her face looks anxious and apprehensive.

Scene 8

Exterior **Asoka, Tishya**

Asoka takes out a pearl necklace from his neck and extends his hand to offer it to Tishya Rakshita. But she declines to receive it.

Tishya ''Aryaputra ! My hands will not receive any gift unless my heart needs it. My heart may accept the gift when my eyes see Kumara Asoka as the Emperor of Magadh. Till then, let my heart throb as violently as possible while my head prays for success.''

Asoka (*feling embarrassed*) ''Once I have taken out my necklace, I cannot put it back around my neck.
And, If your hands are not willing to accept it, let my hands put it at the proper place for which it is intended.''

Asoka puts the necklace around the neck of Tishya with his own hands.

Tishya ''Aryaputra ! Let your necklace hang around my heart so that it gets enriched with hopes -- the hopes for your victory.''

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Asoka — "Dear Girl ! Rest in the Palace as long as you want. For me, let the race of life begin from now. I have not asked you your name. But I shall cherish your name for ever if my stars lead me to success."

Tishya — "My Lord ! I am Tishya Rakshita. I have fulfilled my mission. I shall rest in Ujjayini till I see you on your path to Pataliputra. And, please believe me, I have to reach Pataliputra before your army reaches its outskirt !"

Asoka (*smiling*) — "Let us see who wins the race. Let me take leave of my beloved Devi before I start the race."

Tishya looks apprehensive.

Tishya — "May I be permitted to convey the Prime Minister's last message to you ?"

Asoka — "Why not ?"

Tishya comes very close and freely raises her face to Asoka's ears.

Tishya (*in whispers*) — "The Prime Minister in his wisdom says that the Prince should not be guided by the Sakya Kumari in these moments of crisis. He says `Streebuddhi Pralayankari'."

Asoka smiles. Tishya smiles and bows down.

Scene 9

Interior — **Asoka, Devi**

Asoka returns to the bedroom where he finds Devi standing. While Asoka feels restless, Devi is grave and serene.

Devi — "So, it is yet another fullmooon night when you come across yet another girl of your choice who deserves your own neckless."

Asoka — "Yes, it is indeed another momentous night. On that distant fullmoon night my heart fell in for you. On this fullmoon night my heart goes out not for love, but for the fulfilment of a hope."

Devi — "I have heard most parts of your discussion outside the room, not through the ears of the walls, but my own ears."

Asoka — "It is good that you have overheard everything. Now dear, would you not like to be the Empress of Magadh ? Would you not give me your best wishes to capture the Throne ?"

Devi raises her eyes and looks grim.

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Devi "Have I not advised you over the years not to run after the illusions of the earthly desires and ambitions ! Have I not told you that all these powers and positions are false ? Oh Dear, please change your mind which has been spoiled by that mischievous girl. She has poisoned you to lure you to a dangerous path. I pray, do not invite risks to your life and do not destroy the peace of your mind. Do not run after the unknown and the uncertain !"

Asoka "Devi, should I expect from lips these words at this moment of my life ?"

Devi "This is the most appropriate moment when you need these most appropriate words for your sake and for our sake. When you are inspired to do something which is gravely wrong, am I not your beloved wife to advise you not to do it ?"

Asoka "How do you feel that I am entering upon a wrong path ? Is my path to the throne a wrong path ? Is it not the will of most Ministers and most Courtiers that I come to the Throne ? Is it wrong to become an Emperor to serve humanity ?"

Devi "Did your revered father so desire that you succeed him to the throne ? If it is not his will, your ambition to go against his will is itself wrong ! You believed that stranger girl that your father is dying or dead ! But you have no such information from your mother the Queen or from the officers of the Capital ! Is it not your duty as a son to run alone to see your ailing father ? Instead, you are going to capture his throne by force ?"

Asoka (*raising voice*) "Devi, stop preaching your sermons when I do not need them. To me, the Throne of Magadh belongs to me after my father. If he is alive, I need not claim it. If he is no more, I shall have to gain it. This is the only right path for Asoka."

Devi (*with emption*) "You think, the Throne belongs to you. But, to me, the Throne belongs to your elder brother Susima. It is he who is his father's choice and it is he who is the legitimate heir to the Throne of Magadh !"

Asoka (*flares up*) "Do you dare utter the name of that Devil before your husband ? Do you forget how that Demon tried to kill us in the very night of our honeymoon at Vidisa ? Do you not bear the wound of the assassin's spear on your shoulder ? Do you not know that he is a wretch, a villain and is unfit to rule ? Yet you say he is the legitimate heir ? Legitimacy is decided not by the chance of birth, but by the length of the sword ! Devi, for Heaven's sake please do not stand in my way when Pataliputra calls me."

Asoka turns his back to go out. Devi Holds his feet by both hands to stop him from going.

Devi (*in tears*) "Oh, my Beloved ! What has that girl done to you in a moment ! How

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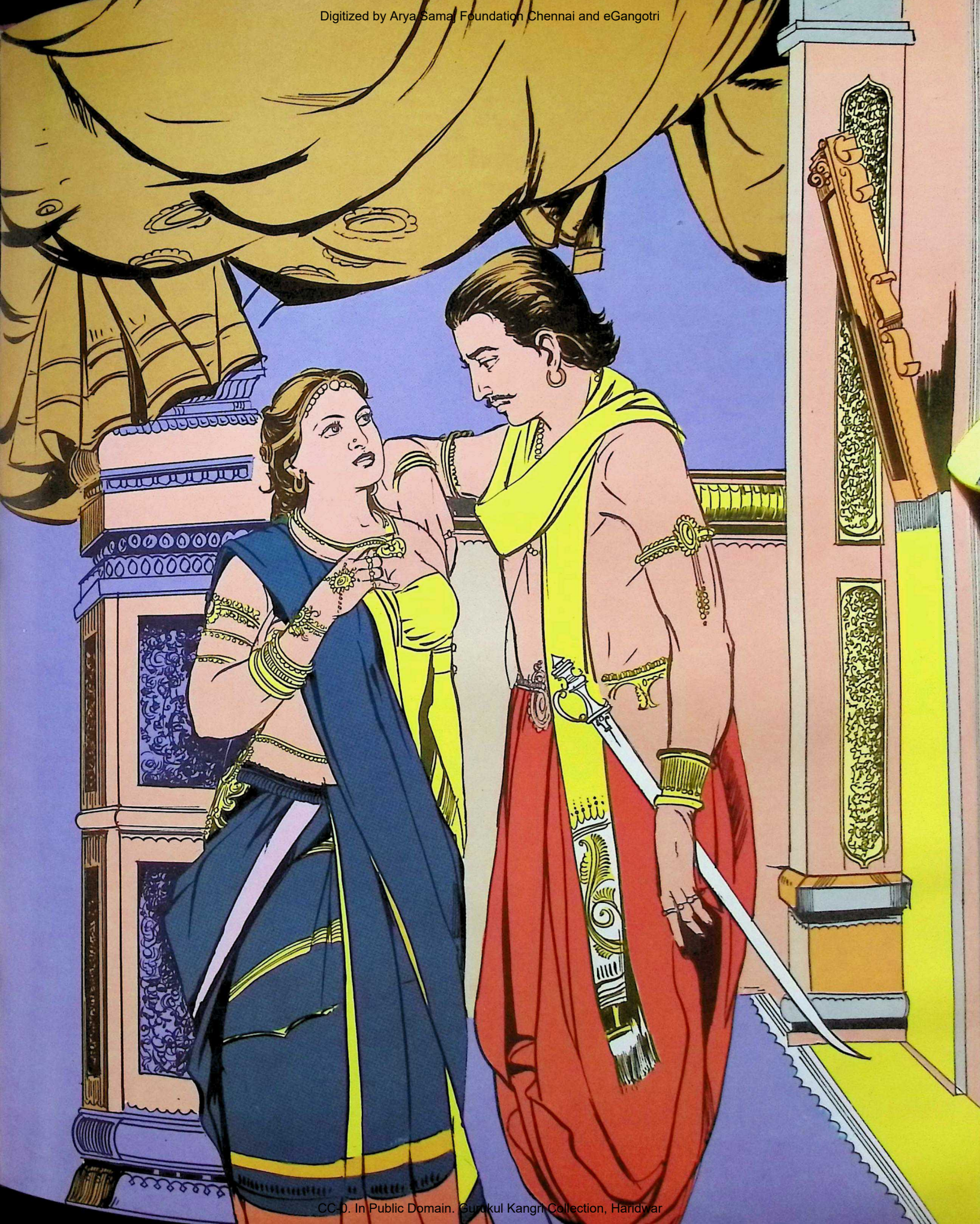

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Asoka Fights with Yasas in Front of Vidisha Monastery

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Prince Susima Hitting Khallataka with Gloves

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could she apply her magic to turn you hungry for power ? How could her words make you so stern and stubborn ? Is a Throne more precious than the Peace of Life ? Oh, no, please change your opinion about your elder ! Try to respect him and win him over by love and submission. Do not raise your sword against a brother for your lust for the mundane Throne !''

Asoka (*in stern voice*) ''When I expected your words of encouragement, you show your real character by trying to dampen my spirit. Correctly did Tishya Rakshita say: `Stree Buddhi Pralayankari !''

Asoka goes out in a haste.

Scene 10

Ujjayini:Parade Ground **Asoka's Generals, Army**

Flash Scene of Asoka's Army at Ujjayini on march. The troops are marching out to the play of Drums and trumpets.

Scene 11

Taxila: Susima's Apartment:Interior **Susima, His Generals, Queen's Messengers**

Susima inside his apartment is walking restlessly up and down before his stunned Generals.

Susima ''What would the world think of me if the Revolt is not controlled ? What will Pataliputra speak of me for my failure ? You tortured and killed some of the Amatyas. But the situation turned worse. You have withdrawn your army from the mountains, but you have not yet captured that ruffian from Ujjayini ! You punish the citizens, but you do not find the culprits ! What can I do, what can I do ? How long should I be here ?''

A General ''Our soldiers have searched every house in Taxila and in its suburbs. I think, Yasas has fled for fear of his life. An Amatya confessed that he is no longer here.''

Susima ''What about his agents ?''

2nd General ''They too seem to have disappeared.''

Susima ''What for should they run away if the Revolt still goes on ? If only you can catch one of Yasas's man, it will be my trophy of victory. I shall drag that man to the Emperor to prove that it was not the Taxilan Revolt, but an Asokan Revolt -- engineered from Ujjayini by that scoundrel of the Mauryan House.''

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The two messengers from Susima's Mother enter and bow down. Susima recognises them by looking at their face. The two men are tired and exhausted.

Susima "Oh my Mother's servants ! How do you come thus far ? What news do you bring from the Palace ?"

The two men look to the Generals. Susima waves his hand asking the Generals to go. The Generals leave the Apartment quietly.

Ist Messenger "Your Highness ! Did the Prime Minister's men reach you with the Emperor's order to you to return to the Capital ?"

Susima (*surprised*) "No. Nobody came to me from the Prime Minister ! No order has reached my hand from the Emperor !"

2nd Messenger "Her Majesty the Queen's suspicion is correct that the Prime Minister does not want you to go back even though the Emperor needs your presence near him urgently."

Susima (*anxiously*) "Why does my father need me near him ? Does he think that I have failed to suppress the Revolt and therefore should go back ? No. I should not go back to show my face to my father unless and untill I win victory ! Go back to my dear Mother and tell her about my decision--Susima should return only as a Victor."

Ist Messenger "Aryaputra ! Her Majesty the Queen's letter will explain the matter."

He opens his chest jacket and brings out a small roll and hands over to the Prince. Susima opens the letter roll and goes through the contents with wide open eyes. His face turns serious. He trembles in anger. He looks furous by the time he finishes reading.

Susima (*in uncontrollable anger*) "Soon will Pataliputra see me back. Soon shall the Prime Minister see the naked sword of Susima. Soon will the Traitor's blood clean my feet. It is conspiracy. Let my Mother's blessings take me to see my Father alive."

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Episode Sixteen

Commentary

The race for the Throne of Pataliputra between Prince Susima and Prince Asoka began in right earnest. Before any of them could reach Pataliputra, Bindusara breathed his last. Tense moments followed when the Throne fell vacant.

Scene 1

Ujjayini : Army Ground **Asoka, Tishya Rakshita, Generals, Soldiers**

From a raised platform Asoka is observing the marching out ceremony of his troops from Ujjayini towards Pataliputra. The Generals stand below the platform in rows. Soldiers, numbering thousands, are seen standing in attention behind the Generals in long lines.

On the platform, behind Asoka stands Tishya Rakshita in disguise as a boy. Asoka addresses the Army.

Asoka "My Faithful Followers ! Generals and Soldiers ! You have worked for me for years when I have worked for you as the Viceroy of Avanti. A time has now come when you and I shall have to work for the cause of the whole *Bharatavarsha*, our Holy Motherland. The Blessings of Gods and the best whishes of the Ministers as well as of the Citizens of Magadh are with us."

"Soldiers ! It is going to be a battle between the forces of the Good and the Evil. I am marching to the feet of my revered Father, your Gracious Emperor, Bindusara Amitraghata. We are going to kneel down in the Temples to pray for his recovery from a fatal sickness. If the forces of Evil try to capture the Throne by taking advantage of the Emperor's illness, we shall fight to finish them. Let us go with full confidence that

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the Victory will be our's. The forces of Evil are too weak to face us, they are not our equals, they are far inferior to us in number and in courage."

"Let us go to Pataliputra with Victory in sight. I demand your absolute loyality to me as your leader for the cause of Magadh."

Generals raise the slogan.

Generals (*in unison*) "Victory, Victory, Victory, Victory be for Aryaputra Rajapratinidhi Kumar Asoka."

Soldiers (*in chorus*) "Victory for Aryaputra Kumar Asoka."

The Generals march forward and take turn towards the exit of the Army Ground. Soldiers follow their Generals. Asoka observes the Marching Out Ceremony of his forces. After the Army has gone out, Tishya steps forward to speak to Asoka.

Tishya "Aryaputra ! Your words show your worth. You have rightly placed before the Army a great cause to fight for — of the cause of the Emperor and of the Empire. Nobody will now call you a Rebel Prince. This is farsight, this is statesmanship, this is political intelligence. You are now like a champion of virtues against the Crown Prince who represents vices."

Asoka "Dear Tishya ! My captains will take you to Pataliputra in a chariot at any time of your choice."

Tishya "Chariot ! I believe in speed. A horse will run faster than a chariot. I shall go back as I came. Not with your army, but with my escorts. And, I have to reach the Capital before your Army reaches it."

Asoka "Wonderful ! But, do you think, your horse can run faster than my horse to land you in Pataliputra before I do ?"

Tishya "Aryaputra, your horse will run on the long highway with your cavalry. My horse will run through shortcut routes. It is the destination that matters, not the routes."

Asoka smiles in admiration.

Tishya "Aryaputra ! I know you are waiting for someone from Taxila and delaying your departure. But, for me this moment is the best moment to depart. May I take leave of you !"

Asoka "I am surprised that you can read my mind ! Yes, I am waiting for Yasas. He is expected any moment."

Tishya looks at Asoka's eyes lovingly and bows down.

Asoka "Tishya ! Will you not see me in Pataliputra when I reach ?"

Tishya "No, Aryaputra ! I shall present myself before your august person in the Palace itself when you are on the Throne of Magadh."

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Scene 2

Outside Ujjayini: Cross-Raod **Yasas, His Followers, Tishya, Her Escorts**

Outside the city of Ujjayini, there is a cross-road where highways from West and East, North and South meet. From the West is coming Yasas on horse in disguise as a pilgrim. Behind him are his 10 followers in disguise. Tishya Rakshita is riding out of Ujjayini in disguise as a boy, with five of her escorts on horse. The two parties come across each other while Yasas is entering the road towards Ujjayini and Tishya is going out of it. Yasas looks at Tishya's party with suspicious eyes. He shouts from horseback.

Yasas "Oh you travellers from Ujjayini, will you stop and get down ?"

Tishya (*from Horseback*) "Gentleman ! Why should we obey your order ?

We are as noble passersby as you people are !"

Yasas (*surprised*) "Oh, I see ! You seem to be a boy ! But your voice is that of a girl ! I say, get down, or else I shall stop you by force !"

Tishya gets down from horse. Yasas gets down from his horse. Both face each other. Tishya observes the face of Yasas with sharp eyes.

Tishya "You look like a sage for wearing a beard. But your voice and words sound like those of a highway robber ! Am I wrong ?"

Yasas "Do you know, you are talking to a person who can do you any harm ?'

Tishya "Do you know, I can drag you to the Viceroy and uncover your beard to expose you as a criminal ?"

Yasas (*laughing loudly*) "To the Viceroy ? Is the Viceroy so easily available to hear your complaint ?'

Tishya "Why not try !"

Yasas looks at her with amazement.

Tishya "Quickly clear out of my sight. Don't you have eyes to see ? Look eastward to see the Army of the Viceroy on march. Look southward to see his cavalry force coming from Ujjayini. If I shall raise my cry, you will find your head flying upward."

Yasas looks eastward to find a cloud of dust in the wake of the marching army. He looks southward to see the cavalry froces coming forward.

Yasas "Dear sweet girl ! Are you with the Viceroy's army as a spy ?"

Tishya "Dear old Pilgrim ! Are you an agent of the enemy ?"

She promptly pulls down Yasas' beard from his face and starts

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to shout at the cavaliers. She also takes out Yasas's sword hanging behind his waist under a thick shroud.

Yasas "Oh, no dear no ! These cavaliers do not know me as the Viceroy's own man ! They will cut me down if you shout at them. Please stop your shouting."

The cavalry force is passing by the road towards the highway.

Tishya "You say, you are the Viceroy's own man ! Are you Yasas from Taxila ?"

Yasas is taken by complete surprise.

Yasas "How could you know my name ? Yes, dear, yes, I am Yasas."

Tishya "Please run to the Viceroy as fast as you can. He is waiting for you in utmost anxiety."

Yasas takes to horse. Tishya also gets up to her horse.

Scene 3

Asoka's Apartment: Interior **Asoka, Yasas**

Yasas reaches the Viceregal Palace in Ujjayini and meets Asoka, They are in discussion.

Asoka "Yasas, The Taxilan Revolt was your plan. You have executed it in the most marvellous manner. I have no words to thank you. Have you still kept Susima tied up to the place ? Has he come to know of the grave illness of the Emperor ?"

Yasas "Yes, Aryaputra. Susima has received urgent summon from his mother to reach Pataliputra at once. The Prince has come to know of his father's fatality. Having come to know of this I have run back to you to inform of it. Or else, I could stayed there to keep Susima fixed to Taxila."

Asoka "So, Susima must be now on his way to Pataliputra !"

Yasas "I am sure, he is on the move. We have therefore to take a lead over him. Our army is already on its march. Let us also move without losing a moment."

Asoka "I am ready to move. But, dear friend, you cannot accompany me."

Yasas (*surprised*) "Have I fallen from your favour to hear this ! Have I lost your trust in order not to accompany you ?"

Asoka "I am taking a plunge into the unknown ! I know how dearly do I need you in this venture. But at this critical juncture of our life, I have a greater work for you to offer."

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Yasas "Can there be any other work greater than fighting for you to reach the goal ?

Asoka "Yes, a more difficult work than winning Pataliputra is being given to you. Who can protect my wife and dear children here if not you ? Nobody can foresee what danger may fall on me. The distance between the Throne and the Grave is always slender. But why should my innocent wife and children suffer if I fall on the battlefield. And who can save them except Yasas ?"

Yasas "Aryaputra ! You mean..."

Asoka "Yasas, You are the man who brought to me the Sakya Kumari as my consort. She feels most unhappy that I am launching upon a violent course of bloody action. She does not like it. She is emotionally broken. I have no courage to take farewell of her. It is you alone who can give her comfort and consolation. Dear Yasas, I leave my family in your charge as I go out to fight for the Throne."

Yasas "My Lord, I understand the nature of my responsibility. I shall be here in Ujjayini and shall wait for the day when I shall take Devi to you as the Empress of Magadh."

Asoka "My mind apprenends many dangers. Yes, grave dangers to the lives of my wife, son and daughter. I fear to take them with me, I fear to leave them behind."

Yasas (*emotionally*) "Aryaputra, Yasas knows how to face dangers, how to lay down his life and to save others. I pray, kindly go on your mission forgetting Devi, Mahindra and Sanghamitra. I shall live for them and shall die for them to keep them safe."

Asoka finds tears in the eyes of Yasas.

Scene 4

Highway **Asoka, Cavalry Forces**

A Flash Scene showing Asoka riding fast on the highway, followed by a large cavalry force, towards the East.

Scene 5

Forest Road **Susima, Cavalry Men**

A Flash Scene shows Susima sitting in a small chariot driven by two horses and driving eastward. His chariot is followed by a smaller force of cavalry men.

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Scene 6

Bindusara's Bedroom: Interior **Bindusara, Queen, Spy**

Emperor Bindusara is nearing his death. He is gasping for breath and losing consciousness. Susima's Mother is sitting near her husband's head and uttering the names of Gods. Bindusara opens his eyes and mumbles some words.

Bindusara "Has Susima arrived ?"

Queen "He will be here any moment."

A Spy enters and bows down.

Spy "Your Majesty ! Cavalrymen have been sighted near Kasi. The Crown Prince is expected to reach Pataliputra soon."

Bindusara "Dear, he says soon, you say any moment. But any moment may also be my last moment. Kasi is yet far off. No. I cannot wait. I may not see him."

Queen "Please have peace of mind. He will be reaching you tomorrow."

Bindusara "Tomorrow never comes. It is only today that we see. I have waited for many tomorrows. Every tomorrow has come as a today. Before I close my eyes, I shall call my Court in this room and shall proclaim Susima as the Emperor from my death bed, in his absence."

He closes his eyes. The Queen goes on chanting hymns in slow voice.

Scene 7

Night: Radhagupta's Room: Interior **Radhagupta, Tishya**

A nervous Prime Minister is sitting like a statue of stone inside his room, cross-legged and with closed eyes. A Guard brings in Tishya and goes out. Radhagupta gets up.

Radhagupta "Tishya, You have brought life to me. Tell me quickly if you have achieved your goal ?"

Tishya "Your Prince will be here within the next two-three days. He has reached Kasi. He is approaching Pataliputra very fast."

Radhagupta "The Vaidyaraj says, this very night may be the last night of the Emperor. He ordered me to summon the Court to his room, but I am delyaing to carry out the order. I fear, Prince Sudatta may occupy the Throne till Susima reaches the Palace to take over from him. How can I face the situation ! I see the Lord of Death coming nearer to me than

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towards the King. I see my head like a rotten fruit ready to fall on ground any moment !''

Tishya ''Mahamantriji ! You are the only man who cannot afford to lose nerve at this critical hour when we are all in the same boat sailing through storms. Supreme courage is the only way to escape the situation. I have a suggestion for you to work it out.''

Radhagupta ''Speak out promptly what have I to do ?''

Tishya ''The moment the Emperor breathes his last, in front of the assembled Courtiers, members of the Royal Family and the Priests, announce it boldly that the Emperor's Mortal Body should lie in state for 3 days as permissible till the Crown Prince arrives in the Palace to perform the funeral rites. The Chief Priests can be prevailed upon to accept your proposal. Still more boldly you have to announce that the Crown Prince has reached Kasi and shall reach Pataliputra in a day or two, that is certainly before the 3rd day. Nobody will doubt the Prime Minister, not even Prince Sudatta.''

Radhagupta (*full of joy*) ''Tishya ! What an excellent idea ! I wish you could have been I ! What a fertile brain ! But, suppose, Prince Susima reaches earlier than the time of cremation ? Should I then also be ready for my funeral ?''

Tishya ''My knowledge of my country's distances prompts me to say that Susima can never reach Pataliputra in the next three days. Instead, you can surely find Asoka to perform the cremation before the time expires.''

Radhagupta ''May Heavens shower Blessings on you, dear little fairy.''

Scene 8

Bindusara's Bedroom : Interior **Bindusara, Queens, Sons, Vaidyaraj**

Bindusara is struggling with death. Around his death bed stand the members of his royal family with tearful eyes. The Vaidyaraj is holding the hand of the Emperor and is still counting his pulse. Bindusara's face and eyes show that the last moments have come. He struggles to mutter a few words but fails to do so. Suddenly his head slips from the pillow. The Vaidyaraj keeps down his hand quietly and heaves a sigh.

Vaidyaraj ''His Majesty's Soul has now reached the Heaven.''

He raises his folded hands upward. A death-like silence descends on all.

Scene 9

Exterior **Radhagupta, Ministers, Courtiers, Priests, Generals**

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Outside the Emperor's Bedroom, inside the Courtyard, are standing the Prime Minister with other Ministers, Courtiers, Priests and Generals. The wailing voices of the Queens are heard from inside. The Vaidyaraj comes out to announce the death of the Emperor.

Vaidyaraj "Our Gracious Chakravarti is no more. His eternal soul has left his mortal body for its Heavenly Abode. May his soul rest with the Gods."

He wipes out tears from his eyes. A deep silence reigns on the assembled people. Prince Sudatta and other Princes emerge out of the room. Radhagupta quickly gets up to the verandah and stands in front of the Princes and face the audience below.

Radhagupta "In this grave moment of sorrow when our hearts throb in memory of the departed soul, I have to say that the mortal body of the Emperor should be kept in state on the death bed for three full days. Cremation will take place on the Bank of Mother Ganga before the sunset of the third day. I have reports that our Gracious Majesty, the Crown Prince Susima will reach the Palace within the time limit. The funeral will take place on his arrival as it is the right of the Eldest Son to put his father's body to fire. In case there is some delay on the part of the Crown Prince to reach before the sunset of the third day, the next available eldest son of the late lamented Emperor, Prince Sudatta, will perform the last rites of his father."

Radhagupa turns his face to Sudatta who is standing to his right. The Prince nods his head giving his willing consent. Radhagupta looks to the Priests.

Radhagupta "Venerable Priests ! If I am incorrect from religious point of view, kindly do correct me. You are the real authority on the rites and rituals of cremation. You know the Scriptures. Your words will be the final words."

The Chief Priest climbs to the veradah.

Chief Priest "Mahamantri ! What you have suggested out of your wisdom as a learned Brahmin is perfectly correct from religious point of view. If the Eldest Son is available, it is his right to lit the funeral pyre. If he is not present, the next available eldest son will do that work."

Radhagupta turns to Generals.

Radhagupta "I call upon the Generals to prepare for the funeral ceremony the like of which Pataliputra never has seen."

Assembled Gathering "May the Sacred Soul of our venerable Emperor be in peace in the Heaven."

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Episode Seventeen

Commentary

The death of Emperor Bindusara Amitraghata is followed by a violent fratricidal war among his sons. While Asoka captures the Throne with the support of the Prime Minister Radhagupta, Susima and his brothers challenge his usurpption and fight a grim struggle to dethrone him. The Mauryan Empire is thus thrown into a great turmoil.

Scene 1

Radhagupta's House: Interior **Radhagupta, Tishya**

Radhagupta is much worried. Tishya Rakshita enters into his room.

Radhagupta "Dear Tishya ! You are like an angel of hope to me. I have called for you for yet another heroic act in this moment of crisis. You have to meet Asoka again to tell him to enter the capital only at the time of the funeral ceremony. If he comes earlier, other Princes will upset our plan. If he arrives when the funeral pyre is ready for fire, he as the senior-most available Prince will have the right to lit the fire."

Tishya "What do you propose ?"

Radhagupta "Asoka Army is approaching the vicinity of Pataliputra. Please go and tell him that he should halt his march at a considerable distance till the sunset of the appointed date. His soliders may enter into the city tomorrow night and get merged with the citizens unsuspected. Asoka will enter the city only at the last moment."

Tishya "What will heppen if Prince Sudatta comes to know that it is not Susima but Asoka who is hastening towards Pataliputra ? Information has already reached the Palace that cavalry forces have been sighted on the

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Gangetic plains !''

Radhagupta ''I have taken precautions in this respect. Spies have spread over everywhere to circulate the news that Prince Susima is coming back from Taxila.''

Tishya (*smiling*) ''So, while everybody is expecting Prince Susima to appear, suddenly they will find Prince Asoka descending on Pataliputra from nowhere Mahamantriji ! Whose magic wand is it that creates the impossible and the improbable ?''

Radhagupta (*laughing*) ''Of course it is the magic wand of Tishya Rakshita which does it.''

Scene 2

Before Sunset: Palace Gate **Dead Body of Bindusara, Royal Family, Courtiers, Soldiers, People**

Sunset is approaching. A procession emerges from the Palace Gate and proceeds towards the Cremation Ground on the bank of river Ganga. Members of the Royal Family are led by Prince. Ministers, Courtiers, Generals and Soldiers are behind the Royal Family. As the procession comes out with the dead body of Bindusara placed on a decorated chariot, crowds of people waiting outside join it. The procession moves towards the river bank.

Scene 3

Sunset: Bank of Ganga **Same, Radhagupta, Priests**

On the bank of river Ganga, at the centre of the Cremation Ground, is seen a big platform of decorated funeral pyre. The Royal Princes carry the dead body up to the pyre. The Priests chant the hymns. Prince Sudatta in silken robes is waiting for the instruction of the Chief Priest to perform the rites.

Radhagupta ''Venerable Chief Priest ! The Sunset is near. Prince Susima has not yet arrived to perform the last rites of his father, the Emperor.''

Chief Priest ''In that case, Prince Sudatta will lit the fire.''

Sudatta ''I am ready for your directions !''

Prince Sudatta advances towards the Pyre, led by the Chief Priest. Unexpected noise is heard from behind the crowds of mourners. Shouts of unknown people drown the sound of the hymns of the Priests.

Shouts of People ''Prince Asoka has come ! Prince Asoka is here !''

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Scene 4

Same **Near Distance Asoka,Soldiers**

Prince Asoka gets down from horse. His soldiers also get down from horseback. The crowds make way for Asoka to reach the Funeral Pyre.

Scene 5

Funeral Pyre **Same, Asoka**

To the surprise of all present, Asoka comes near the pyre and puts his head at the feet of his dead father. His eyes show tears. He looks to the Priests.

Asoka "Venerable Priests ! How fortunate am I as a son to have the last glimpse of my beloved father ! I have come at the most right moment to pay my last respect to the departed soul and enjoy the privilege of discharging my last duties towards my father !"

Chief Priest "Swagatam Kumar Asoka ! You are indeed lucky ! We were eagerly waiting for the eldest son of the Emperor Prince Susima to lit fire to the pyre. Since you are your father's next son, you are now required to perform the last rites."

Sudatta (*excited*) "I am already holding the firewood, and ready to lit fire."

He angrily looks at Asoka.

Chief Priest (*quietly*) "Prince Sudatta ! In the presence of your elder, you are not entitled to do it.

Sudatta (*raising voice*) "Why not ?"

Chief Priest "Noble Prince ! There is no time for me to answer. The moment for the cremation has come. The sun is about to set."

Without waiting, Asoka takes up a piece of firewood and follows the Priests. The Priests in unison chant the funeral hymns. Drums are beaten and conches are blown. Asoka goes round the pyre for three times and puts fire to it. Flames go up. People raise slogans.

People "Chakravarti Samrat Bindusara Amitraghata Amar Ho Gayen. Chakravarti Samrat Amar Rahe.

As the flames rise higher and higher, Asoka comes back to distance. a priest whispers to his ears.

Priest "Aryaputra ! The Ajivaka Saint and Astrologer Pingalavatsa is waiting

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for you on the bank. He requests you to come to him at once.''

Asoka moves out as the mourners sit down quietly to join the chanting of the sacred hymns. The sun is setting on the Ganges.

Scene 6

Same: At a Distance: River Bank **Asoka, Pingalavatsa**

The Saint- Astrologer Pingalavatsa is seen advising Asoka in soft voice.

Pingalavatsa ''Aryaputra ! This night is the most auspicious night of your whole existence. All the great stars are in most favourable positions. You should not miss this night.''

Asoka ''What do you mean by this ?''

Pingalavatsa ''Sit on the Throne in the very first quarter of this night.''

Asoka ''How can I do it when my father's funeral is not over ?''

Pingalavatsa ''I say, move for action right now, at this moment. If you hesitate, these precious hours will never return to you again. Heaven is with you in these hours of the night. I say, go ahead.''

Dusk is setting in. Hymns are going on. Smoke is rising to sky.

Scene 7

Night:Palace **Asoka's Soldiers**

Asoka's General and soldiers are seen spreading out in speed throughout the interior apartments of the huge palace. They surround the Throne Room, the Court Hall, the Council Hall of the Ministers, the apartments of the Queens and every other place.

Scene 8

Night:Hall of Ministers **Radhagupta, 30 Ministers**

Inside the Council Hall, the Ministers are seated in rapt attention and grim silence. Soldiers are seen inside and outside. Guards are standing with lighted torches in every corner. Radhagupta comes in.

Radhagupta ''Honoured Ministers of Magadh ! This moment calls for your supreme wisdom and your supreme determination. The moment demands of you your most momentous decision. You have to take this decision keeping in your mind the interest of this great Chakravarti-kshetra of

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Bharatavarsha, established by Chakravarti Samrat Chandragupta Maurya and the Sage Chanakya. You have to keep in mind the greatness of the Mauryan Dynasty as well as the well-being of the subject-humanity. You have to decide your choice for the Throne of Magadh.

"I Propose that we, as the Council of Ministers, raise to the Throne the most glorious, most eminent, and the most capable son of the late Emperor. He can be none other than Prince Asoka, the victor off Taxila, the Viceroy of Avanti, the Prince in whom the Sage Chanakya saw the marks of greatness, the Warrior who knows no fear, and the Person who is like an embodiment of intelligence and ability."

Ministers — "We accept Asoka as the rightful heir to the throne. Jayatu Samrat Asoka. Jayatu Chakravarti Asoka.

Radhagupta — "Honourable Ministers ! Gods will smile on us for our sound decision. Country is sacred. Collective wisdom is sacred. Let us all proceed to the Throne Room."

Radhagupta leads the procession of the Ministers towards the Throne Room at a little distance where Asoka's Generals and soldiers greet them with naked swords and long spears in their hands.

Scene 9

Night: Throne Room — **Radhagupta, Ministers, Asoka (Age30) Generals, Sudatta and Sugatra**

The spacious Throne Room is packed to capacity with Courtiers and Generals. On the raised platform glitters the precious Throne of the Mauryan Empire. In the background wall is seen a big golden peacock --- the insignia of the Maurya Dynasty. Asoka's Soldiers are everywhere inside and outside. Lighted torches are fixed to the floor and the walls.

The procession enters. Ministers led by the Prime Minister walk forward through the passage. Behind them walk Asoka robed in imperial attire, followed by his Generals.

Asoka climbs the steps to the platform as the Courtiers pay ovation. The Ministers stay behind on the floor and take their seats. Asoka stands before the Throne and faces the auidence. Trumpets are blown outside.

Asoka — "Ministers and Courtiers ! I pay to you my respect as the trusted and loyal courtiers of my late Father. May my late Father's immortal soul shower blessings on you from Heaven for your loyalty to the Mauryan Dynasty and the Mauryan Throne. And, with your goodwill, support and trust, I stand here to defend the dignity of the Throne and of the Dynasty."

The Courtiers cheer.

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Asoka "And, as desired by the Council of Ministers, I take the Throne to rule the Empire, to protect my beloved subjects, to sudue the enemies, and to defend the Empire."

Wild ovation breaks out as Asoka approaches the Throne and sits on it. Side by side, across the din of ovation is heard a loud voice of protest. From a back seat stands up Prince Sudatta. Ovation stops and the Courtiers turn their faces towards him.

Sudatta "This is not accession to the Throne. This is a sinful usurpation of the Throne. The Throne of the Mauryas belongs to the eldest son of our late father, the Crown Prince Susima, not to anybody else on earth."

From another seat, gets up Prince Sugatra to raise his voice of protest.

Sugatra How do you dare to enact this illegitimate role ! Could you not wait till the legitimate successor to the Throne arrives ? It is a heinous act of treachery you are playing. Vacate the Throne at once. Do not spoil its sanctity."

Commotion breaks out. Asoka's Generals rush towards Sudatta and Sugatra with open swords. Asoka stand up from the throne, and proceeds to the edge of the platform to address.

Asoka "I am on the Throne at the will of the Council of Ministers. That is the legitimacy of occupation. The wise Ministers are the best judges of the individuals who aspire for the Throne. They are the best judges in respect of the interest of the Empire and of the Mayuras."

Sudatta (*shouting*) "They are all traitors. They are in league with you. They will see the Hell when the Crown Prince arrives. And, you too will perish for your criminal act."

The Generals approach the Princes to remove them from the Throne Room. Sudatta takes out his sharp naked sword and cuts down a General to two halves.

Both the Princes escape from the hall in lightening speed before, Asoka's soldiers overpower them.

Scene 10

Night:Susima's Apartment **Sudatta, Sumana (Susima's Wife)**

Princess Sumana, the wife of Prince Susima, is lying on her bed. She is sobbing and weeping. Prince Sudatta comes rushing inside.

Sudatta "Bhabi ! For sake of your life, come out with me. Brother Susima has

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already reached Prayag. His soldiers are marching towards Pataliputra. This devil Asoka may do harm to you in fear of death from hands of the Crown Prince. Please come with me.''

Sumana gets up promptly. Both rush out of the room.

Scene 11

Exterior **Sudatta, Sumana**

Sudatta helps Sumana to get up to a waiting horse in the courtyard. The women guards do not obstruct them. Sudatta also gets up. They ride towards the backside of the palace compound and vanish in darkness.

Scene 12

Night: Dharma's Bedroom **Dharma, Asoka**

Dharma is offering her prayers before an image of Vishnu. Asoka enters.

Asoka ''Mother ! Your son has come to take dust from your feet.''

He bends his head and takes dust from his Mother's feet. Dharma breaks down with emotion and weeps.

Dharma (*sobbing*) ''Asoka, my dear son ! You are now the Chakravarti Monarch — how can I describe my feeling of this moment ! But, my heart trembles in fear from the time I saw you near the funeral pyre ! Dear Asoka, better welcome Susima and offer him the Throne so that my fears vanish. He cannot see you on the Throne.''

Asoka ''Maa ! You have suffered from many anxieties for your son. But should you also feel anxious and fearful when your son is near you ?''

Dharma ''Asoka ! I feel nervous for your safety more than ever before. I know Susima well. He will stoop to any means to harm you.''

Asoka (*laughing*) ''A hundred Susimas may combine against your son. Like straws I shall blow them to thin air. Susima will never venture to challenge me. He knows what Asoka is. But if he works againt me, he shall never see Pataliputra. He will disappear from the Empire of Asoka for his life.''

Dharma looks at Asoka's face of courage.

Asoka ''Mother ! Please go to Susima's Mother, my dear Aunt, to assure her of my respect and reverance to her. I shall continue to treat her as my own mother. It is the Destiny and the desire of the wise that had denied Susima the Throne. It is not Asoka who is his enemy. It is he himself

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who is his worst enemy. He made it known to each and all that he is the most worthless son of his glorious father.''

Scene 13

Highway **Sudatta, Sugatra, 2 Other Princes, Sumana, Soldiers**

Four sons of Bindusara are riding fast on the highway towards the West. A small chariot is carrying Princess Sumana, escorted by soldiers on horseback. Sudatta's cavalry force is riding behind.

Scene 14

Highway **Susima, Soldiers, Sudatta and others**

Prince Susima, seated in a chariot and followed by his cavalrymen, is seen on the highway coming from the west.

Prince Sudatta his three brothers are seen on horseback riding from the East. A small chariot carrying Princess Sumana is running behind them. Both sides finding each other, come to a halt. Sudatta and others get down from their horses and Sumana gets down from her chariot. Susima also comes down from his chariot.

Susima (*In great surprise*) ''How do I find you here, my brothers? How do I see Sumana too here and in this condition? Am I in a dream?''

Sudatta ''Brother! You are late, if not too late. Our revered father left his mortal body. And that disgraceful devil Asoka has captured the Throne. That wizard Radhgupta was the chief villian of this sordid game of treachery. We have escaped with dear Bhabi from their clutches to reach you.''

Susima looks red and trembles in rage.

Sugatra *''Brother ! Our loyal forces are waiting for you in the outskirts of Pataliputra. The citizens of the Capital are burning with anger for Asoka's usurption of the Throne. Some Ministers and Generals are with us, though they are keeping silent in fear of punishment. Soon they will join us when we reach Pataliputra.''*

Susima looks at his wife and finds her in tears. Suddenly he develops violent temper.

Susima ''I shall not rest till I wreck my vengeance on the traitors. I shall move heaven and hell to destroy my enemies. By trick they deceived my father and sent me to Taxila. By conspiracy they prevented me from returning

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to Pataliputra. They have played their nefarious part. It is now for us to play our part.''

Sumana — ''Aryaputra! This is not the time to lose one's self-control. Please be calm. It is fate that has betrayed you. It is Gods alone who can restore you to your legitimate place. Let us pray for the Blessings of Heaven!''

Susima — ''Damn your Gods and Heaven. Man is the maker of his own Destiny. I shall reduce Magadh to ruins to avenge this.''

Sudatta — ''First allow me to take my Bhabiji to a safe place. I shall join you at the nightfall outside Pataliputra.''

Scene 15

Highway

Flash Scene of Susima's chariot and forces advancing eastwards Pataliputra.

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Episode Eighteen

Commentary

Prince Susima soon arrives in Pataliputra to take possession of the Throne as its rightful occupant. Failing to recapture the Throne, he with his followers retreat to dense forests to conduct campaigns against Asoka. In the grim War of Succession that follows, many innocent people fall victims to the wrath of either party. Asoka's wife and children face grave dangers in Ujjayini when Susima's forces fall upon that city to capture them.

Scene 1

Night: Outside Walls of Pataliputra **Susima, Soldiers**

The army of Susima falls upon Pataliputra in a surprise night attack. The City Wall extend for miles, facing the rivers Ganga and Sone. Outside the Timber Wall, there is a moat of 60 feet in depth and 200 yards wide.

Susima's forces are trying to cross the moat by logs of wood and try to climb upon the Timber Wall.

Asoka's soldiers are seen on the inner side of the Wall. From the loopholes on the Wall, the archers are seen shooting arrows at the enemy. From the top of the high towers, archers are showering arrows on the invaders.

At some of the gates of the City Wall, the soldiers of both sides are seen fighting grim battles. When the attack fails, Susima orders his forces to withdraw.

Susima (*on horse*) "Soldiers, retreat. We shall come back again."

The army of Susima is seen retreating from the City Wall. They

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vanish in darkness. Many dead bodies are seen floating on the moat, and lying at the gates of the City Wall.

Scene 2

Dense Forest:Tent **Susima, Sudatta, Sugatra, Generals**

Inside a big tent in a dense forest, Susima and his brothers are in discussion. Five Generals are present.

Susima "Next time let us make a day-time attack on Pataliputra so that the people of the Capital come out in large number to stand behind us. Once the people recognise their Crown Prince, they will brave all risks and dangers."

Sudatta "Brother, we are proud that our soldiers are in fine spirit."

Sugatra "We are also proud of our brother's popularity with the citizens of Magadh. The rich citizens have started donating their wealth for our victory."

Ist General "In no time, the soldiers of Asoka will desert him. I am trying through my agents to attract them to our side."

Susima "If there be men and money, I can conquer the earth. Can Asoka stand before me or any of my brothers ? He must be trembling within himself day and night finding his Gods of Death before his inner eyes. He must be tasting how sweet is the Throne with enemies all around."

He bursts into a hearty laughter.

Sugatra "Brother ! This war of succession should not be confined only to our attacks on Pataliputra. We have to extend our field of action. We have to drive Asoka mad by creating unrest everything. Let me suggest at this point that we should capture his wife, son and daughter who are now in Ujjayini. Asoka will be frightened to death if we do it and will submit to us to beg for their lives."

Susima "An excellent idea, Sugatra, an excellent idea ! Take my hearty love for presenting such a plan !"

Sudatta "I suggest that Sugatra with a force may proceed to Ujjayini without delay. I fear, Asoka might be trying to remove his family now that he is the master of the Maurya Palace."

Sugatra "I am ready to go to Ujjayini right now. Our soldiers may also plunder the treasury there and capture the remaining forces of Avanti to our side."

Susima "Go ahead my dear brother. When Pataliputra comes to my hand, Avanti

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will go to you and you become its Viceroy. Go with a big force. Capture that witch of a woman Vidisa Devi who might be now thinking of herself as the Empress of Magadh. And, that offspring of the devil Asoka, calling himself Mahindra or the Lord of the Earth might be thinking of himself as the future monarch of Bharat as I have no son. Let Asoka realise that God knows how to administer His divine punishment to the sinner.''

2nd General — ''I pray for permission to accompany Prince Sugatra to Ujjayini with my cavalry force.''

3rd General — ''Your Majesty ! We are preparing a hideout inside the surrounding hills for the safe shelter of our soldiers in order to avoid enemy detection. It is only from a fortified shelter that we can conduct our extensive campaigns.''

Susima — ''Do it. Select suitable caves to accommodate Princess Sumana and her maids. Also, find out caves for me and my brothers. Erect fortification for the safety of my soldiers.''

Scene 3

Ujjayini Palace: Devi's Room — **Yasas, Devi. Mahindra (10), Sanghamitra (8), Spy**

Inside the appartment of Vidisa Devi are sitting Yasas, Devi, Mahindra, Sanghamitra awaiting for reports from Pataliputra. A Messenger enters and bows down.

Yasas — ''We are spending restless days and nights awaiting your arrival with the message from Pataliputra. Tell us if everything is in favour of Aryaputra Asoka.''

Messenger — ''God has favoured our gracious Majesty in every respect. The Chakravarti Monarch has sent me to inform Her Majesty the Empress that very soon will arrive here the royal forces with chariots to take Her Majesty and the royal children to Pataliputra. The Emperor has further said that Prince Susima's attack on Pataliputra has failed miserably and that he with his brothers has fled to forests for life.''

Devi looks sad. Mahindra and Sanghamitra look to the eyes of their mother to find tears. Yasas too observes her sadness. The Messnger goes out.

Yasas — ''Sakya Kumari ! Can there be a better news than this ? Your beloved husband is now the Chakravarti Samrat of Bharat. You are the Empress, the Maharani ! I pay homage to you.''

Mahindra — ''Uncle ! What am I now, when my father is the Emperor ?''

Yasas — ''Oh ! I forget to pay my homage to you as the heir apparent to the

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Throne of Magadh ! My dear Mahindra, you are the future Emperor of this great land.''

Sanghamitra ''Uncle ! What am I ?''

Yasas ''Dear Mitra ! You are now the daughter of the richest Emperor on earth. You are now Princess Sanghamitra. I pay my homage to you,''

The children look to their mother with a sense of pride, but find her sad and tearful.

Sanghamitra ''Maa ! You are weeping !''

Devi wipes out tears from her eyes.

Yasas ''Sakya Kumari ! Have I not told you again and again that as a wife you have to share the happiness of your husband, his wishes and desires, his achievements and successes in life ! When he climbs a mountain, you too have to climb it. When he swims through a river, you too have to swim ! A wife is the part and parcel of her husband's being. Devi, you are inseperable from Asoka. This being so, when he is happy at this moment of triumph, should you look sad or shed tears ?''

Devi (*sadly*) ''What you say is correct. But what worth is a wife if her wishes are taken as of no worth ? What worth is my life when my beloved husband goes on a wrong path and I am unable to stop him?''

Yasas ''You should not say so or feel so. Your husband goes for a cause that is great. It is the need of the country and of the country's humanity. Whatever he does is of immense worth. You have to submerge yourself in the sea of your husband's wishes. You should link your destiny with his destiny. If he is the Emperor, You are the Empress. The two minds should work together.''_

A Spy enters. Yasas looks at him with delightful eyes.

Yasas ''What extra news do you bring ? Are the chariots on way to take the *Maharani* to Pataliputra ?''

Spy ''Mahabhaga ! My agents have spotted outside Ujjayini a large number of soldiers, resting in the forest. They have seen Prince Sugatra with them. We apprehend evil. This Prince has turned hostile to the Emperor.''

Yasas ''Go, and send your men in disguise to observe their movements.''

Spy goes out. Yasas looks depressed.

Yasas ''Sakya Kumari ! it will be unsafe for you and the children to live in this Palace. The Army of Ujjayini left with the Viceroy for Pataliputra. Our palace guards are very few in number.''

Devi ''So, do you realise now why I offered my prayers to my husband not to embark upon an ambitious path giving up a life of sublime happiness ?''

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Yasas — "It is not the time to think over this big issue. It is the time to face the situation. If prince Sugatra has come so far, it means he has come to capture Ujjayini. It means, his attack on the Palace is imminent. Who knows what he intends to do to you and the children!"

Devi — "I shall face him with love if he comes with hatred. I and my children are not enemies of Susima and Sugatra ! If Asoka has done wrong let them fight against him. Let them come and kill me since I am the wife of their enemy. But why should they touch my innocent children ?"

Mahindra and Mitra — "Maa, we shall also die with you."

Yasas — "Dear Ones ! Do you think Yasas will be living to see you suffer ?"

Yasas laughs aloud.

Devi (*to children*) — "God will save you. Your Uncle will look after you, Go for your meals."

The children go out.

Yasas — "Devi, I am incharge of your safety. That is the order of your husband. Please get ready. I shall take you to a hiding place."

Devi (*looking stubborn*) — "No, I shall not leave this place. I shall wait here to welcome my husband's brother. If he comes to harm me, I shall tame him to be noble. After all, he is a human being!"

Yasas — "Dear Sakya Kumari ! You have yet to know that a brute may appear in human form. Once again I pray to you, kindly get ready to escape before it is late. I cannot take you with me by force, but may I offer my appeals to you with all my force of soul to give up your decision to stay here. It will be suicidal. it will be too dangerous for you and the children. Sakya Kumari, please pity this humble slave and work as I say."

Yasas turns emotional and looks at Devi in despair.

Devi — "My dear friend ! All that I pray to you is to leave me here to suffer for wrong deeds of my husband. I shall suffer for his *Karma* so that I can win the forgiveness of the Buddha. But, at the same time, I pray to you to take my children to safety. Let them not suffer for the work of their father. They are too innocent. I leave their fate to you, dear Yasas. I pray for your safety to Buddha Tathagata who knows to bless those who help others in distress."

Yasas — " I is your decision final ?"

Devi — "Yes! Yes, I cannot change my mind ."

Yasas — "Devi, there is no time for me either to try to change your mind. My wife will be with you through thick and thin. She too knows to suffer. Let me take the children far far away...."

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Devi "May I pray to you not to take them to far Pataliputra, but to further away to Kapilavastu where my preceptor, Sannyasi Upagupta, lives. Place the Kapilavastu where my preceptor, Sannyasi Upagupta, lives. Place the children in the charge of the Sannyasi. While on your way, tell my children that I shall join them in Kapilavastu before it is late."

Devi sobs. Yasas in in tears. He bows down at the feet of Devi and goes out in slow steps looking again and again at her sad eyes.

Scene 4

Evening: Forest Road **Yasas, Mahindra (10) Sanghamitra (8)**

Yasas is in the dress of a tribal leader. Mahindra and Sanghamitra look like tribal children. They are walking very fast on bare foot through narrow forest paths. Yasas is holding a long spear in his hand and carrying a dead animal on his shoulders. The children are carrying on their heads baskets containing fruits.

Mahindra "Uncle ! How far behind is our Mother ! You said, she will join us."

Sanghamitra stops and looks behind to see whether her Mother was coming.

Yasas "Dear Mahi, your Mother will reach us only when we reach our destination. She is coming by a different route !"

Sanghamitra "Uncle ! Are we going to our Father to see him on the Throne !"

Yasas "Mita ! Of course we shall go to him later. At the time we are going to a place from where your Mother's ancestors came. A faraway place where Gautama Buddha was born. From there, you will see the Himalayas."

Sanghamitra "Uncle ! Can we walk that far ? I know where the Himalaya stands--at the far end of Bharatavarsha !"

Yasas "Oh, little one ! I shall take you there in a bullock cart. Let us first cross this forest."

Yasas lifts Sanghamitra to his right shoudler and walks faster.

Mahindra "I can walk even faster than you !"

Sanghamitra finds a big Azagar snake on the road. She cries aloud. Yasas stops. He aims his spear at it.

Mahindra "No, uncle, don't kill it. Allow it to pass away."

The snake moves away. Night falls.

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Scene 5

Night: Devi's Bedroom **Devi, Yasas's Wife**

Sad and tearful, Devi and Yasas's wife are sitting inside the bedroom on the floor in the night near a dim lamp. They are chanting the Buddhist hymns of prayer.

Scene 6

Exterior **Palace Guards, Sugatra, His Soldiers**

Outside Devi's bedroom are standing 10 Palace Guards with open swords in darkness. Sounds of cavalrymen are heard at the gate. In moments, Prince Sugatra with troops comes in.

Sugatra (*to guards*) "Drop your swords, you dogs !"

Chief Guard "We have been ordered by the Empress not to resist. In obedience to her command, we drop our swords, not in fear."

The guards drop their swords.

Sugatra "Where is that Woman?"

The guards show the door. Sugatra and some of his men dash inside.

Scene 7

Interior **Devi, Sugatra, Yasas's Wife, Soldiers**

Sugatra enters into the room. Devi and the other lady stand up. Devi looks gracious.

Devi (*in loving words*) "I welcome you dear *Debar*. Be pleased to take your seat."

Sugatra "Oh ! Truely indeed ! You are talking like an Empress ! You dare call me your Debar ? But, I have come as your captor. I have come to capture the Devil's wife which you are."

Devi "Would you call your elder brother a Devil ?"

Sugatra "Devil is a mild term. He is a Demon, a Beast in human form. Do you have the tongue to remind me that he is my elder brother ? Do you forget what kind of respect he has shown to his elder brother, our respected eldest, Prince Susima ?"

Devi "My dear *Debar* ! Would you like to exchange evil for evil, and wrong for wrong ? If Asoka has gone wrong, would you also go wrong ? Can you not return good for the evil ?"

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Sugatra (*agitated*) "Where did you hide this charming tongue of a witch when your lover decided to win the Throne ? You want to disarm me by your sweet words ! But I am no fool. Now, tell me where are the two vicious offsprings of that vicious wretch?"

Devi "Kumar ! What offence have those innocent children committed to deserve your anger ?"

Sugatra "Don't you kill the smaller snakes because they are born of a bigger snake ? Tell me, where are they !"

Sugatra looks at his soldiers.

Sugatra "Soldiers ! Search the whole palace. They must be somewhere."

Devi "It is needless to search. I have sent them away. When I am here to receive punishment for the fault of my husband, I would pray for your mercy to spare the children."

Sugatra 'What do you say ! Sent them away ! How could you know that we are coming this tonight ? Tell me who told you ? Tell me where have you sent them ? Or else I shall cut down the head of this woman !"

Sugatha draws out his sword and goes near to Yasas's wife who is standing quietly.

Yasas's Wife "Yes, please do cut me down to pieces. I am before you. but, by cutting me down you are not going to get the Prince and the Princess. They have fled to their safety. May be, to their father the Emperor."

Sugatra delivers a heavy slap on her face and she falls down.

Sugatra "Soldiers ! Take these women as captives. I can imagine, the children have not gone towards Pataliputra. No, nobody can dare take them there knowing our presence around the City. They must have been taken to Vidisa City, to their grandfather."

Devi (*in fear*) "Oh, my dear brother ! My children have not gone to Vidisa City. Have pity on my old parents ! Do not ask them about my offsprings."

Sugatra (*laughing*) "You cannot deceive me. The safest place for any child is the home of the maternal uncle."

Soldiers take out Devi and Yasas's wife with them. Sugatra goes out.

Scene 8

Dense Forest **Yasas, Mahindra, Sanghamitra, 2 Soldiers**

Yasas from a tree top finds two soldiers coming in the direction of the forest path. He comes down and takes the children to a nearby abandoned and unused well, full of wild growths and

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shrubs. The children go down deep into the well with much difficulty, holding to the roots of a big banyan tree which covers the ruined well. Yasas goes to a distance and sits down under a tree like a hunter, with a spear in hand. Two soldiers on horseback locate Yasas and come down.

1st Soldier — "We are thirsty, Can we drink water from this well ?"

Yasas — 'Brave fighters ! Don't you see how I am perspiring and sweating? I too need water like you. But this well is unused and full of poisonous snakes. To drink water from it is to invite painful death. Better take some fruits from me and quench your thirst."

Yasas opens his bag and offers ripe mangoes to the soldiers. The soldiers start eating.

Yasas — "You may feel more thirsty after eating the fruits. You may ride back towards another well which has clean water."

2nd Soldier — "Hunter ! Did you see any person or persons going by this way with a boy and a girl ?"

Yasas — "Oh you mean the two high-born boy and the girl who were passing through this dense forest yesterday evening to whom the lions ate up ? What a pathetic scene !. Some fools were taking those two unfortunate creatures by this way, not knowing about the presence of lions and tigers all around. You mean the two who are no more !"

!st Soldier (*to the other soldier*) — "What a good news ! Let us run to the Prince to tell him that the children of Asoka have been eaten up by lions."

2nd Soldier — "The Prince must have reached Vidisa City by now. Let us go there."

Yasas — "Brave friends ! In this forest, I see you as the first soldiers ever in my whole life. No soldier comes to be eaten up by animals. If a lion or a tiger smells the presence of your horses, in moments they will fall upon you and finish you. Why did you come this way in search of children ?"

1st Soldier — "Oh my God ! tigers and lions to drink our blood !"

The soldiers immediately get up to their horses and run back.

Scene 9

Night: Vidisa City: Merchant's House **Sugatra, Soldiers**

Prince Sugatra with his forces reaches the house of the Vidisa Merchant, father of Devi. It is past midnight. They get down from horses and break open the gate and enter inside.

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Scene 10

Interior **Merchant, His Wife, Servants, Sugatra, Soldiers**

With burning torches in hand, Sugatra's soldiers enter into the house and break open the doors. He old Merchant gets up from bed. His wife screams. Servants rush into the room.

Merchant (*shouting*) "Robbers ! Robbers ! Neighbours come out ! Robbers have come !!

Sugatra "You old dog ! Do I look like a robber ? Do these soldiers look like robbers ? I am the younger brother of your beloved son-in-law who is now the Emperor of Magadh !"

Sugatra points a sharp sword at his breast.

Merchant (*trembling*) "My Lord ! My Gracious Prince ! Why come like this ?"

Sugatra "Tell me quickly where have you kept your grandchildren ? I mean, the son and daughter of your daughter Devi !"

Merchant "My Master ! They have not come here. My daughter is in Ujjayini. Her children are with their mother."

Merchant's wife faints and falls.

Sugatra (*to soldiers*) "Search the whole house. Also plunder the wealth of this man."

Merchant "Take everything, but spare us. I do not know anything except that my son-in-law now is the Emperor of Magadh."

Sugatra "Emperor of Magadh ! Well, enjoy the first fruit of your son-in-law's sovereignty."

He pierces the sword to the Merchant's breast.

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Episode Nineteen

Commentary

The War of Succession assumes greater proportion as the days advance. Accession to the Throne does not bring peace to Asoka. on the other hand, it causes immense miseries. His wife Devi is kept by the enemy in close custody, whereas, the whereabouts of his children remain unknown. Asoka's anxieties and anger increase day by day as he is unable to cotrol the enemies as well as to rescue his dear ones.

Scene 1

Dharam's Room:Interior **Dharma, Asoka, Singer**

Dharam is sitting before the Image of Vishnu to offer prayers. A young girl is singing a devotional song in meldious voice while playing upon a vina. The song contains the idea that the Divine Grace is unlimited, unbounded and is always for the good of the creatures. At the end of the prayer both kneel down before the Image and bend heads to the floor, when Asoka enters. Dharma and the singer get up; the girl goes out after paying her respect to the Emperor.

Asoka "Maa ! You have not seen so far my beloved Queen and the children. They will be soon back form Ujjayini to touch your feet."

Dharma (*delighted*) "My heart has always desired to see Devi ever since you married her. But I was never allowed to go to Ujjayini. My soul will now count the moments to embrace her. My joy will see no bounds when I get Mahindra and Sanghamitra near me. Oh God, how Gracious you are !"

Dharma wipes out tears of joy. Asoka goes out.

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Scene 2

Exterior **Asoka, Amatya**

As Asoka emerges out of his Mother's room, he finds a trusted Amatya from Ujjayini standing at a distance and waiting for him. The face of the Amatya shows fear and nervousness.

Asoka (*in delightful surprise*) "Come here Amatya ! I am so glad to see you coming from Ujjayini ! Have the troops and chariots reached Ujjayini to bring the Empress and the children?"

The Amatya comes near to the Emperor and kneels down at his feet and looks to his Master with tearful eyes.

Amatya "Maharajadhiraj Chakravarti ! I thought of taking my own life rather than come to Pataliputra. It is my worst misfortune to bring to you the saddest of the news. May I beg forgiveness !"

Asoka "Saddest of the news ? Speak out quickly ?"

Amatya "Prince Sugatra attacked Ujjayini. Yasas tried his best to take away Her Majesty and the children to a safe place. But the Empress remained resolute not to leave the palace. She wanted to face the invaders boldly and in her own way. Yasas therefore excaped with the children to some unknown destination. His messenger to you was killed along with the other guards. I saw the attack on the palace. I saw how Sakya Kumari was taken as a prisoner. I wanted to die resisting. But, the instruction of Her majesty was not to raise sword."

The Amatya weeps. Asoka remains standing motionless for moments. Next he raises his voice.

Asoka "Have you any idea of where have they taken her ? Do you know where has Yasas carried away the children ?"

Dharma comes out of her room hearing Asoka's voice. She finds her son trembling in anger. Amatya falls at the feet of Dharma. Asoka tooks at Dharma.

Asoka "They have robbed me of my beloved wife. They have forced out my young children to wilderness. This is what malice, envy, frustration and anger can lead my brothers to do ! Maa, what might be happening to noble Devi in prison cell when I am in the palace ? What to my innocent children when I am on throne ?"

Dharma "Dear Asoka ! God will look after them. Do not lose your control on your inner self. Do not feel upset, my son."

Asoka "If I control myself, the enemy will turn uncontrolled. I must teach them a lesson of their life. They do not know what Asoka is. I would not spare Susima or any of his brothers. If they do not send Devi to me with

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honour and dignity, I shall let loose hell on them. I shall search out the whole Empire and outside the Empire to trace my children."

Asoka is in deep emotion He softens his voice and speaks to himself.

Asoka "Devi ! Are you alive ! Can I live without you ? Can I think of your suffering without suffering myself ? Asoka shall rescue you from hands of his enemies. If he fails, there shall be no Asoka to live on earth. "

Trembling emotionally Asoka walks ahead in quick steps. Dharma looks on with tearful eyes.

Scene 3

Hill Cave **Devi, Yasas's Wife, Soldiers**

Inside a dense forest, surrounded by high hills, there is the hideout of Prince Susima and his forces. There are many rock-cut caves in zig zag situation, visible and invisible. Devi, her eyes blindfolded, is taken to a small dark cave with Yasas' s wife.

Captain "This is your shelter from now. Any attempt to escape will invite showers of arrows from the soliders who will keep watch on the cave throughout day and night."

Devi *(looking calm)* "Dear Son! I shall be happy to be here. Ask my other sons not to fear about my escape from here. This will be my cave of prayer. This is like the cave in which Chakravarti Chandragupta spent his last days in the far away South. I shall be also counting my days for death here in this quiet place. Please convey my love and affection to my dear Debraji, Prince Sugatra, for giving me this place of peace to live in—a million times better than the Palace of Pataliputra."

The Captain takes dust from her feet and respectfully goes away. Devi with the maid enter into the dark cave.

Scene 4

Asoka's Audience Hall : Interior **Asoka, Generals, Radhagupta**

Looking grave and serious, Asoka is sitting on his throne inside his Audience Hall. Radhagupta presents a sad look. 10 Generals look fearful.

Radhagupta "Maharajadhiraj ! A thousand spies have gone out to all corners of the Empire to ascertain the whereabouts of the Queen and the children. I have every hope that reports will soon flow in. Action will follow after information."

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Asoka — "Where has Susima built up his hideout ?"

Radhagupta — "Not in any city or town, but in some mountainous forests. The location will be known to us in a few days."

Senapati — "Your Majesty ! The Army is ready for action to attack the hideout the moment we locate it."

Asoka — "If they do harm to the Empress when you attack ?"

Senapati remains silent.

Radhagupta — "Once we know the situation of the hideout, we shall resort to tricks for rescue operation. And, once we liberate Her Majesty, we shall destory the enemy without mercy."

Asoka (*Emotional*) — "Mahamantri ! How long, how long should I wait ? There is a limit to anxiety, a limit to patience !"

Asoka gets up angrily and looks at the Generals.

Asoka — "No matter what happens to the Queen, trace out and capture every suspected person in Pataliputra or elsewhere who is working for the enemy or on behalf of the enemy. There should be no consideration for a tratitor, high or low, a prince or a pauper."

Scene 5

Hideout — **Susima, Sudatta, Sugatra, Suratha, Saugata**

Prince Susima with his four brothers are seen inside a hideout and in discussion.

Sudatta — "Before Asoka consolidates his position, we have to create turmoil in every provincial capital, in every city, and in every town. let us make it our priority strategy."

Sugatra — "Simultaneously, we shall try to get outside help. If a foreign power can join out forces, it will be easier for our army to win victory."

Susima — "Which outside country can come to join us ?"

Sugatra — "Our immediate neighbouring country in the south is the Kalinga Rashtra. Frontiers of Kalinga touch our Empire not at a far distance from Pataliputra. The Kalingans have a powerful army. I can persuade them to invade Magadh from south. If they do it, Asoka will be forced to send a large part of his army to resist the invaders. If that happens, we can easily capture Pataliputra."

Susima — "A good idea ! You may lead a delegation to the Kalinga Capital and make as many promises as you can to win their support."

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Suratha "I can engineer a revolt inside the Palace. Most of the men and women guards are our people. Many of them can never change loyalty. A Palace Revolt will unnerve the usurper."

Susima "An excellent proposal ! Apply your trick to do it."

Saugata "We have many friends in the Capital among the rich and the wealthy. Why not we try at a revolt of the citizens of Pataliputra. The unurper is not liked by anyone. A popular revolt will drive him mad."

Susima "This too is a nice idea. Try to carry it out."

Sudatta "How easy it is to work for destabilisation of an Empire ? How difficult is it to consolidate one's power. We are in advantage as we have to work out destructive plans. Let Asoka collapse before he achieves stability."

They laugh aloud, drink from wine vessels.

Scene 6

Kapilavastu Monastery: Exterior **Yasas, Mahindra (10) Sanghamitra (8), Cartman**

The ancient city of Kapilavastu stands in ruins. Roads are almost deserted. Houses are few and far between. A Big old Monastery stands at a forlorn corner of the Town. At the Gate of the Monastery halts a slow-moving bullock-cart. The cartman gets down and lifts the covering cloth of the cart.

Yasas, Mahindra and Sanghamitra get down from the cart. They look tired, exahusted and sad. Their dirty and torn clothes indicate their wretched condition.

Sanghamitra "Uncle ! Has my mother already reached this place ? Let me call her aloud. She will run out to embrace me !"

Yasas "My little one! Your mother must have first gone to your father in Pataliputra. When I shall send information to them that you are here, they will come at once."

Sanghmitra "Uncle ! How do you know that my mother has reached my father in Pataliputra ? You told us that she will be following us to this place."

She begins to weep. Yasas comforts her by giving a kiss on her forehead. Mahindra is looking at the distant Himalayas with fixed attention.

Mahindra "Uncle ! What a beautiful place is this quiet Kapilavastu ! Is this the monastery where my Mother's great preceptor, Sanayasi Upagupta lives ? Have you brought us here to live in this Monastery ?"

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Yasas gives a kiss on Mahindra's forehead with tearful eyes.

Yasas "Yes, this is the famous Monastery of Kapilavastu. Here lives Sannyasi Upagupta. Both of you wait here and enjoy the snow-clad Himalayas. Let me inform the Holy Man that you are here."

Mahindra and Sanghamitra stand at the Gate. Yasas proceed to the Monastery.

Scene 7

Interior **Upagupta (Middle Aged), Yasas, A Monk**

Sannyasi Upagupta is reading the Scripture inside his room in the Monastery. A Monk comes in.

Monk "Mahabhaga ! A visitor from some great distance desires to see you."

Upagupta "Send him in."

Monk goes out. Yasas comes in. He bows down at the feet of Upagupta and sits in his front with folded palms.

Yasas "Your High Holiness ! I am Yasas, an humble servant of Sakya Kumari Vidisa Mahadevi, the Queen of the Emperor Asoka. Your Holiness perhaps knows by now what has happened to the Mauryan House after the death of Chakravarti Bindusara."

Upagupta "Dear Friend ! I am glad to hear that you are a man of the noble Sakya Kumari. I have heard from the visiting merchants about the violent happenings in Pataliputra. It is unfortunate that the descendants of Chandragupta should fight among themselves for the throne ! I feel deeply sorry to hear that blood flows for mundane power in the land of the Buddha !"

Yasas "The enemy brothers of Asoka have taken away Vidisa Devi as a prisoner from Ujjayini to some unknown destination. I have escaped with her two children. Devi instructed me before she was captured to carry the children to Kapilavastu to be placed under your care."

Upagupta "Where are the children of the Sakya Kumari ? Are they with you ?"

Yasas "They are at the Gate."

Upagupta gets up promptly and goes out.

Scene 8

Exterior **Upagupta, Yasas, Mahindra Sanghamitra, A Monk, A Nun**

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Sannyasi Upagupta reaches the Gate with open arms. He embraces Mahindra and Sanghmitra with deep affection. A Monk takes up Mahindra by arms and a Nun takes up Sanghamitra to her breast. Upagupta looks upward to Heavens and speaks to himself.

Upagupta "Oh Tathagata Buddha ! How have you given two precious children to me ! Blessed is this Monastery ! Blessed is this Bhikshu ! You only know the purpose of bringing Mahindra and Sanghmitra to this sacred place of your birth. Oh Lord, you have your blessings to Devi who is your earnest devotee. Her children, too, will have your blessings ! For the good of the humanity, I shall teach these offsprings of an Emperor Your doctrines of love and non-violence ! Who knows Thy Will ! Who knows of the future of these children of Asoka !"

Yasas shed tears of happiness. They go inside the Monastery.

Scene 9

Night:Radhagupta's House: Interior **Radhagupta, Tishya Rakshita**

Inside the room of Radhagupta, Tishya Rakshita meets the Prime Minister in the darkness of night and they discuss in detail about the situation facing Magadh. A lamp emits light as they face each other.

Radhagupta "Tishya ! Have you no role to play when Prince Asoka has become the Emperor Asoka ?"

Tishya "Do you or the Prince ever remember me after my work was done?

Everybody needs somebody when it is necessary. Nobody remembers anybody when the need is over ?"

Radhagupta "How have I called you if I do not remember you ?"

Tishya "But what about the Prince who is now Emperor ? He has safely forgotten this girl."

Radhagupta "Look, Tishya ! Has he the time to call for you to offer his thanks to you ? How restless is he not ? How unhappy, how desperate, how miserable ? Think of his mental condition ! He may be the Emperor, he may have the Throne and the Palace.

But what worth are these when his beloved wife and dear children are in enemy hands ? God only knows of their condition and fate ! How can Asoka have the peace of mind ? Place yourself in his position and think. You can imagine at least a grain of his mental agony."

Tishya "I feel sorry for him. I curse myself that I became an instrument to separate him from his dear ones. May God forgive me."

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She wipes out tears from her eyes.

Radhagupta — "Dear Tishya, we all happen to be the instruments of Destiny. It is the desire of Destiny that we have to play our respecctive roles in clear conscience. Destiny will bring the result. *Karmanye Badhikaraste Ma Falesu Kadachana.*"

Tishya — "Mahamantriji ! Kindly tell me Karma you propose to impose on me. I shall do it without expecting results, as you say."

Radhagupta — "I want you to play an intelligent role in this moment of crisis. Asoka is desperate. If he overthinks about his family, he will show his weakness as a King, administration will suffer. The enemy will take advantage of it. Ultimately, everything will be lost. Asoka will lose his Empire and the Throne along with his wife and children."

Tishya — "What can this humble girl do in these grave matters ?

Radhagupta — "You have to apply the magic of your mind to restore confidence in the mind of the King. You have to give him comfort and consolation. You have to create hope in his mind that Devi and the children will be recovered. He will believe you, not me. And, you can apply the charm on him which I cannot."

Tishya — "Is it that easy for me to come close to the Emperor to apply my charm on his mind ?"

Radhagupta — "Leave that to me. I shall make you his closest companion."

They talk in whispers for some time. Both feel happy at the end their talk.

Scene 10

Night : Asoka's Room: Interior — **Asoka, Tishya**

Inside his spacious private apartment Asoka is walking up and down showing signs of restlessness. A woman guard brings Tishya Rakashita in. Tishys bows down and pays her respect with folded hands. She looks most attractive.

Asoka — "Radhagupta revealed to me about your feeling that I have forgotten you. No. Dear Tishya, no. How can I forget the one who persuaded me to come to become what I have been ?"

Tishya — "But, Aryaputra, I am also that very girl who is responsible for your separation from your beloved wife and dear children. I suffer no less the agony in my heart as your noblesclf suffers the pain in your mind. I indeed hoped that the Sakya Kumari will accompany you with her children to Pataliputra."

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Asoka — No. She did not want to. She thought that nothing will happen to her from my brothers. She could not anticipate her future. She rather behaved obstinately.''

Tishya (*cunningly*) — ''In that case, she invited her own misery. Had she played her part correctly as the consort of the Viceroy, she could have been now in this Palace as the Empress of Magadh. What a mistake ! What a tragedy !''

Asoka (*sad*) — ''Yes, she must be now repenting for her mistake. Unfortunate Devi, suffering for her own deeds !''

Tishya — ''Aryaputra ! One has to suffer the results of his or her deeds ! That is Destiny. Sakya Kumari is a victim of her own Karma. In good old days, Sita suffered for her small mistake in disobeying Lakshmana's instruction not to cross the three lines he drew before her cottage, and thereby fell a victim to Ravana. And her husband Ramachandra had to suffer untold agony and hardship for wife's unfortunate mistake. That was their Destiny.''

Asoka listens attentively.

Asoka — ''Your words are instructive. Sit down and speak.''

Asoka sits down on a couch. Very near to him Tishya sits down on chair.

Tishya — ''Your Majesty ! The Shastras say, Whatever is written on one's

Kapala (*forehead*) — *will come to pass. They say: Kimba Swayambhu Siva Shakti Vishnu Kapala Duhkhamam Na Karoti Duram Athaparo Jivah Swakarma Bhoga Kapalah Kapalah Kapalmulam.''*

Asoka (*sadly*) — ''Who can read what is written on the forehead ? who can foretell what is stored for Devi ? I have hope about my children because Yasas is with them. But, what about poor Devi !''

Tears appear in Asoka's eyes.

Tishya — ''Aryaputra ! Kindly excuse me to say, if King Ramachandra when ruling Ayodhya could send Queen Sita to dense forests in order to please his subjects, and yet suffer the separation, Your Majesty too have to forget the Sakya Kumari for the sake of governing the subjects for their welfare. If Your Majesty is unhappy, the subjects will feel depressed. The enemy will take advantage of it. Duty is a cruel daughter of God. One has to rise above personal sorrows to discharge the preordained duties.''

Asoka looks thoughtful. Tishya shows some hesitation to make a request, but then speaks.

Tishya — ''My Respected Lord ! I do not venture to advance a request. No, I should not !''

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Asoka "Tishya speak out freely."

Tishya "I learnt from a Sannyasi to read the palms. But I cannot certainly request Your Majesty to show me your palm to read the future."

Asoka (*smiling*) "Why not dear Tishya. My palm is open for you."

Asoka extends his palm towards Tishya. Tishya puts it on her lap and begins to study the signs.

Tishya "Aryaputra ! The signs are clear. After a glorious achievement there is some trouble of a momentary nature, Soon after it comes a greater time of immense happiness. The palm indicates a future of unlimited glory and greatness. It means, your union with your beloved ones will come just a while later when this interval of depression is over. Aryaputra ! I pray that you have a little patience."

Asoka expresses happiness and takes away his hand.

Asoka "If Devi returns, that will be my greatest happiness."

Tishya "Forget Devi for the time being till her Karmic cycle of suffering ends. It is time you think of the destruction of your enemies. Kingship knows no kinship. You have to fight forgetting that they are your brothers. I know some of the intimate girl-friends of Susima, Sugatra and Sudatta. If you allow me, I can know something about the Princes and their where abouts from these beauties."

Asoka "Can you also try to know from them if Sakya Kumari is kept a prisoner at the hiding place of Susima ?"

Tishya "I need time to know all these things. You have to assure me of your patience to wait."

Asoka "I must wait for my good times with patience, dear Tishya. But, you keep on coming to me as often as possible at least to keep the hopes in me alive."

Asoka takes out a Ring from his little finger containing his royal insignia and hands it over to Tishya, saying:

Asoka "Tishya ! Keep it with you. Show it the women guards to come to me at any time."

Tishya bows and goes out.

Scene 11

Sumana's Hideout: Cave **Sumana, Woman Attendant**

Princess Sumana, the wife of Prince Susima, is lying in her bed inside a decorated cave of a hill. A maid is sitting on the floor.

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Sumana "Has my husband returned from his campaign ?"

Maid "No. Not yet. He may be back to the hideout after a day or two."

Sumana "Any information from outside ?"

Maid "Maharani ! I have been ordered by the Prince not to disclose to you anything about an important matter. If you promise not to disclose it to others, I may tell you about it."

Sumana "Do not keep anything secret from me. I shall keep everything to myself."

Maid (*in slow voice*) "Asoka's wife Vidisa Devi has been captured by our soldiers. She has been brought to this place, and is being kept as a captive inside a small cave."

Sumana "Is it true ! Has she not gone to Pataliputra to become the Empress ?"

Maid "No. She is a prisoner instead."

Sumana looks upwards in empty eyes. She speaks to herself.

Sumana "So, she is as unfortunate as I am. Her husband is in the Palace, whereas, she is in a cave ! She is more unfortunate than I. While my dear husband is near me, her husband is far far from her. Such is the Will of God."

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Episode Twenty

Commentary

Prince Susima and his brothers try their best to dethrone Asoka and capture power. Prince Sugatra goes to Kalinga to gain external support. Revolts are engineered in different cities of the Empire. Unable to control the unrest and destroy the enemy, Asoka resorts to extreme violence. His cruelty finally earns for him the Name Chandasoka.

Scene 1

Kalinga Capital: Toshali Fort **Kalinga, Soldiers, 21 Kalinga Chiefs**

The city Toshali is the Capital of Kalinga. the Seat of Authority is located inside a massive Fortress, having high and lofty compound walls. Hundreds of elephants stand at the Main Gate.

Twenty-One Kalingan Chiefs arrive at the Gate of the Fort on huge elephants. Trumpets are blown to announce their arrival. They go inside.

At a distance are seen Prince Sugatra and his Five Companions awaiting entry into the Fort.

Scene 2

Court Hall: Interior **21 Kalingan Chiefs, Courtiers, Priests Sugatra and His Men**

Inside the spacious Court Hall, the 21 Leaders are seated on a raised platform. Below the platform are seated the Courtiers and Chief Priests. The Court proceedings begin with all the Courtiers standing up and bowing their heads before the Council of Leaders on the platform.

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1st Leader "I call upon the Chief Priest to present to the Court his report about the descendants of the ancient Chedi Dynasty which ruled over the Chedi-rashtra extending from the Vindhyas to the River Mahanadi."

The Chief Priest comes to the Platform and faces the Courtiers.

Chief Priest "Honoured Rulers of Kalinga ! The findings of our learned men reveal that the distant descendants of the King Ahichandra who established the Chedirashtra in ancient past are still living in obscurity. The son and successor of King Ahichandra was King Vasu, who by his virtuous deeds, earned the title of Rajarshi. Rajarshi Vasu's remote descendants, belonging to the Chetavamsa, are living now in oblivion. Our learned searchers have prayed for some more time to discover any descendant of that ancient family."

1st Leader "We have to wait till a scion of the Chetavamsa is traced out to become the King of Kalinga. Till that auspicious time when Kalinga gets her ruling royal dynasty, we the chiefs, representing all regions of our vast land that extends from the River Ganga to River Godavari, shall rule this country in our cordial fraternal unity."

Courtiers "We hail this wise decision."

Cheers of joy and approval.

2nd Leader "Let the waiting Magadhans now be ushered in."

A Herald at the door blows a trumpet and next announces:

Herald "May the dignitaries from the Kingdom of Magadha present themselves in the Court."

Escorted by Kalingan Guards, Prince Sugatra and his 5 Companions enter, bow down and take their seats in front of the platform facing the Leaders from below.

2nd Leader "We welcome you to our Court as our Guests of Honour from the neighbouring country of Magadha. Let us have the pleasure to hear you."

Prince Sugatra stands up.

Sugatra "I pay my homage to the Rulers of this great country of Kalinga. We pay our homage to your mighty people. I am Prince Sugatra, one of the sons of the late lamented Mauryan Emperor Bindusara Amitraghata. I have come here as an emmissary of the eldest son of the late Emperor, Prince Susima who is the rightful monarch of the Magadhan Empire. As the world knows it by now, the throne of Magadha has been captured by force and trick by a usurper named Asoka. Against all norms of succession and breaking all usages of the land of *Bharatavarsha*, this usurper has proclaimed himself as Emperor. Prince Susima has sent me to your presence to appeal to you for your gracious military support to over-

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throw the usurper. The brave soldiers of this country are invited to join our army against Asoka, and thereby to secure the throne for the real monarch. In return of this timely help, Prince Susima assures in advance of a Treaty of Friendship with Kalinga, and also agrees to readjust the territorial frontiers with Kalinga in the disputed areas around Gorathgiri and Rajagriha. I pray for your favourable decision."

Prince Sugatra takes his seat. The Kalinga Leaders discuss among themselves for a while.

Ist Leader — "Honoured Prince ! We have heard about the war that is going on between Crown Prince Susima and his brother Asoka for the throne of Magadh. To us, it is an internal dispute. We wish all success for the Crown Prince. We recognise him as the legitimate successor to his father's throne. But, it is our policy not to interfere in the internal affairs of another country. Please convey it to the Crown Prince Susima that Kalinga will remain neutral in this fratricidal war."

Sugatra — "This will disappoint the Prince. He has appealed to you to uphold the cause of justice and Dharma. Susima represents the just cause, and it will be righteous on your part to help him."

2nd Leader — "It is for the people of Magadh to support the just cause and fight for the legitimate successor. We cannot go to another country to decide succession to the throne. Our decision is final in this matter."

Sugatra — "Would not the Kalingan Rulers think it their moral duty to help a Prince in distress ?"

3rd Leader — "If and when a Prince is in real distress, we are ready to offer him shelter and hospitality. At the moment, Prince Susima is fighting a war against his enemy. This is no distress."

Sugatra — "If Kalinga joins this war, Prince Susima agrees to surrender the southern portions of Magadh to your soldiers as and when they advance upon it."

4th Leader — "That will be an immoral act on our part. This will be like taking advantage of Magadha's internal turmoil. We do not want to do it. We may invade a country like brave invaders, but not in the way you suggest."

Sugatra — "Do I go back then in disappointment ?"

1st Leader — "Brave Prince ! Go back with courage to fight a just cause. Let your internal strength be the real strength to win the battle. We pray for your victory. But, if you lose and want to escape punishment, come to Kalinga for your safety. We shall offer you hospitality and protection."

Sugatra — "I offer my thanks to you for this assurance. May I seek a favour from you while we are in Kalinga ? We have come here in disguise to escape

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Asoka's spies. We have to go back to our place of safety across the frontier. We are unarmed. Can your noble troops escort us to safety ?''

1st Leader — ''Do you believe that the Mauryan spies are hiding in the Kalinga country to cause you harm ?''

Sugatra — ''It is on an elaborate Spy-System that the Mauryan Administration stands. The spies of Magadha are everywhere, inside the Empire and outside the Empire. There can be no doubt about this.''

2nd Leader — ''If you apprehend attacks on your person in our country, our soldiers will take you to your place of safety. We know to honour a son of Emperor Bindusara in distress.''

Scene 3

Asoka's Audience Hall — **Asoka, Radhagupta, 3 Generals, Spies**

Asoka and Radhagupta are listening to the Spies along with some Generals inside the Emperor's Private Audience Hall.

1st Spy — ''Your Majesty ! Prince Sugatra went to the Rulers of Kalinga to beg for their help. Enemies as the Kalingans are always and ever, they may create some mischief on our southern frontiers. We are waiting for further reports.''

2nd Spy — ''Your Majesty ! Enemy agents are most active on the Gangetic Valley. Revolts have broken out in Prayag and Kasi-Varanasi. Multitudes of pilgrims and pious men gather in these two holy places. Enemy agents in disguise as Sadhus are instigating trouble by spreading false stories of various omens like ...''

He stops.

Asoka — ''Go on. Speak openly.''

2nd Spy — ''They spread stories that Evils of Sins have cast their shadows on the Throne. Soon will there be famines, epidemics, earthquakes and storms.''

Asoka looks angrily at the Generals

Asoka (*loud voice*) — ''Round up the Sadhus of Prayag and Kasi. Their stories may cause incalculable harm. People's faith in sins and sufferings is deep-rooted. They will go by superstition. Give these Sadhus examplary punishment by cutting down their tongues. Drive them out from religious centres. Drive them to fear. They are the most easy instruments of the enemy.''

3rd Spy — ''Your Majesty ! There is no information as yet about the whereabouts of the Empress and the royal children.''

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4th Spy "Your Majesty ! There is also no information about the enemy hideouts."

Asoka trembles in rage. The Generals and Spies show fear and nervousness.

Asoka "Failure ! Failure ! Failure on all fronts ! No. This drama should not go. Asoka knows no failure. It is by striking terror in the hearts of all people, guilty of innocent, that I can drive the enemy and their agents to hell."

Asoka looks at the Generals with anger. They look grim.

Asoka "Generals, carry out my order as I say. Go to Kasi and Prayag. Massacre the suspects publicly and beat up the Sadhus and subject them to torture. Exsinguish every sign of revolt ruthlessly. Do not forget the maxim `Fear is the Basis of State'."

Asoka looks to Radhagupta who looks sad and depressed.

Asoka "Prince Sugatra could reach Kalinga Rulers for help ! I shall teach the Kalingans a lesson of lessons. Send our agents to ascertain facts if the army of Kalinga is on its move. If they invade, Asoka knows how to face them on the frontier".

Asoka looks to nervous Spies.

Asoka "Try your best to know about the enemy hideout. I believe, if the Empress is alive, she must be only in the hideout of the enemy princes."

Asoka waves his hand at the Generals and Spies to go out. All of them go out. Only Radhagupta stays on. From a backdoor of the apartment, enters Tishya Rakshita. She comes near to Asoka and stands close to him.

Tishya "Your Majesty ! I can guess now where could have the enemy hideout be. My calculation may not be wrong."

Radhagupta (*frowning*) "Can you guess correctly when one by one all my guesses go wrong ?"

Tishya "Mahamantriji ! In the game of guessing, a woman's brain is more sharp than that of a man !"

Asoka "Tishya ! What have you thought of the enemy hideout ?"

Tishya "Your Majesty ! Prince Sugatra could not have gone with his followers to distant Kalinga from any other place of Magadh except the southern frontiers tips where our Empire meets the Kalinga territory. While returning from Kalinga, he could not have proceeded to any further distance undetected. The enemy hideout, therefore, can only be located on the frontier hill tracts bordering upon Kalinga. There is another reason to believe in this. The enemy Princes know that they are destined for defeat and destruction. Therefore, they must have selected a place from where they can easily escape with their life. It is easy for them to escape to

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Kalinga which is extremely hostile towards Magadha. I appeal, the spies may now go to the hills around Gorathagiri instead of wasting energy in going to distant Taxila, Indraprastha, or Madhya Bharat in search of hideouts.''

Radhagupta (*amazed*) ''Plausible, plausible ! Tishya's calculation appears logical.''

Asoka ''Thank you Tishya. You may be correct. Susima cannot conduct his operation from distant Taxila. Nor can he operate from a near place like Kasi, Prayag or Ayodhya. These places are not safe for him. He must be hiding in a safer place like the hills of Gorathagiri.''

Tishya ''Aryaputra ! I can give yet another clue. The most intimate girl companions of the royal Princes vanished from Pataliputra that very night when Your Majesty rose to the Throne. My information is that they fled to the town of Rajagriha. And, the revered Prime Minister knows that the commandant of the Fort of Rajagriha is a great favourite of Prince Susima who appointed that worthless man to that superior position.''

Radhagupta looks emarrassed and intervenes.

Radhagupta ''But, that man is too timid a fellow, a simpleton, and a good-for-nothing-man to dare to go against the interests of the Emperor !''

Tishya ''Mahamantriji ! Pardon me for saying that timid fellows and idiots are more loyal and trustworthy than intelligent self-seekers !''

Asoka (*laughing*) ''Dear Tishya ! I wish you could be my chief adviser to help me in knowing human character. If your guess proves true, Asoka's rewards will be abundant. Let us hope for the best. Let our attention now turn on Gorathagiri hills and Rajagriha Fort.''

Scene 4

Flash scenes of Asoka's soldiers conducting raids on suspected houses. Scenes of punishment follow. Scenes of resistance, struggle, fire and killing are seen at several places. Screaming men and women run out from their homes shouting curses to the Emperor. Market centres and city streets look deserted.

Scenes of Sadhus being beaten up and tortured. Scenes of oppression and suppression at several places follow. Angry multitudes are seen shouting abusive and insulting words against the Emperor. Asoka is described as a sinner, a tyrant, an illegitimate king, and a despot. People shout in favour of Prince Susima at various places.

Scene 5

Court Hall: Interior **Asoka, Ministers, Courtiers, Soldiers**

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The Court Hall is full to capacity brim. Ministers and Courtiers look serious. some of the faces express resentment and anger. Herald announces the coming of the Emperor. Asoka enters into the Court Hall and climbs up the platform and sits on the Throne. Silence prevails. Radhagupta looks anxious.

Asoka (*standing up*) "Let the Prime Minister inform the Court about the activities of the enemies and how is the situation being faced."

Before Radhagupta stands up to speak, an Old Minister gets up.

Old Minister "Chakravarty ! I have to say this with pain, but I have to say this for sake of my consciene that our soldiers are running mad and committing atrocities on our innocent subjects. They are attacking pious monks and priests, Sadhus and Merchants merely on suspicion. There is resentment from may quarters. As the seniormost Minister in age, I beseech that the brutality of the army be put to an end. Or, else ..."

Asoka (*standing up*) "Hold your tongue ! Do you have the courage to complain against my loyal soldiers who are doing their duty to preserve peace and tranquillity ? How else will they suppress restlessness fomented by the enemy agents ? You are speaking like an agent of the devils !"

Old Minister "I am not speaking as an enemy agent, but on behalf of the people who are suffering for no fault. What for then am I a Minister if I have no freedom to speak the truth ? Chakravarti ! If you suspect a loyal Minister, you may suspect any body on earth ! Will there then be no honest man in your domain ? Chakravarti ! I tender my resignation and take leave of the Court."

Asoka "You are not only a disloyal Minister, but are a traitor and a rebel. You dare raise your standard of revolt in the open Court and in the presence of your Emperor ?"

Asoka thunders at his Guards, trembling with anger.

Asoka "Soldiers ! Take out this old man in chains. Throw him to prison. He deserves execution. He will be beheaded publicly so that other rebels and traitors learn a lesson."

Soldiers catch the Minister to drag him out. An Old Priest stands up boldly and fearlessly to protest. The Courtiers turn attention towards him fearfully and in silence.

Old Priest "Maharajadhiraj ! I appeal to you for your mercy. It will be a great sin to execute an innocent, loyal, faithful old Minister of the State who has served the Empire for long. No Minister was put to death by Your Majesty's gracious grandfather and father. I can feel the mind of the Court that nobody thinks him to be a traitor."

Asoka (*in temper*) "You too are in league with the enemy. You too are an agent of Susima

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in the Court. You too should deserve the same punishment as that Minister."

Asoka looks to soldiers.

Asoka — "Take him out and throw him to prison. He too should be beheaded publicly. I shall have no mercy for anyone whom I suspect to be working against me and against my Government. Let it be known to each and all that Samrat Asoka will stand no protest against his actions in the larger interests of Magadh and for the stability of the Empire."

Soldiers drag out the Priest. Courtiers remain silent in fear. Radhagupta looks miserable and helpless. Asoka leaves the Court through a backdoor.

Scene 6

Exterior — **Radhagupta, 5 Ministers**

Outside the Court Hall as the Courtiers disperse and go away quietly, Radhagupta and Five other Ministers stand to discuss the situation. They look sad and nervous.

1st Minister — "Today it is they. Tomorrow it will be you and I. We have to keep our necks ready for the sword."

Radhagupta — "I feel upset as never before. The Emperor is losing the balance of his mind. His cruelty is the outcome of his won emotional distress. His subconscious fear about the fate of his wife and children, his fear from the side of his desperate brothers, and his fear of unforeseen events make him so ferocious. His inner self is in ruins. I feel helpless."

Scene 7

Night: Palace Courtyard — **30 Palace Maids, Asoka, Guards**

In the darkness of night, about thirty Palace Maids are sitting and gossiping in the Courtyard of the Maurya Palace beneath a big Asoka Tree. *They are talkig ill of Asoka and are describing him in abusive terms. Asoka, covering his face and body under a black gown, is seen walking down the Courtyard alone and in darkness. The talks of the Maids reach his ears. He stops and stands in a lone corner of the Courtyard to overhear the Maids. He is invisible to the Maids.*

1st Maid — "The Emperor's face looks so ugly when he is angry that it looks like the face of a monster."

2nd Maid — "Think of his voice ! It sounds like the roar of a tiger or a wild beast."

3rd Maid — "Have you seen his eyes ! Oh dear ! They are like the eyes of a Cobra !"

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Prince Susima Falls into Death Trap

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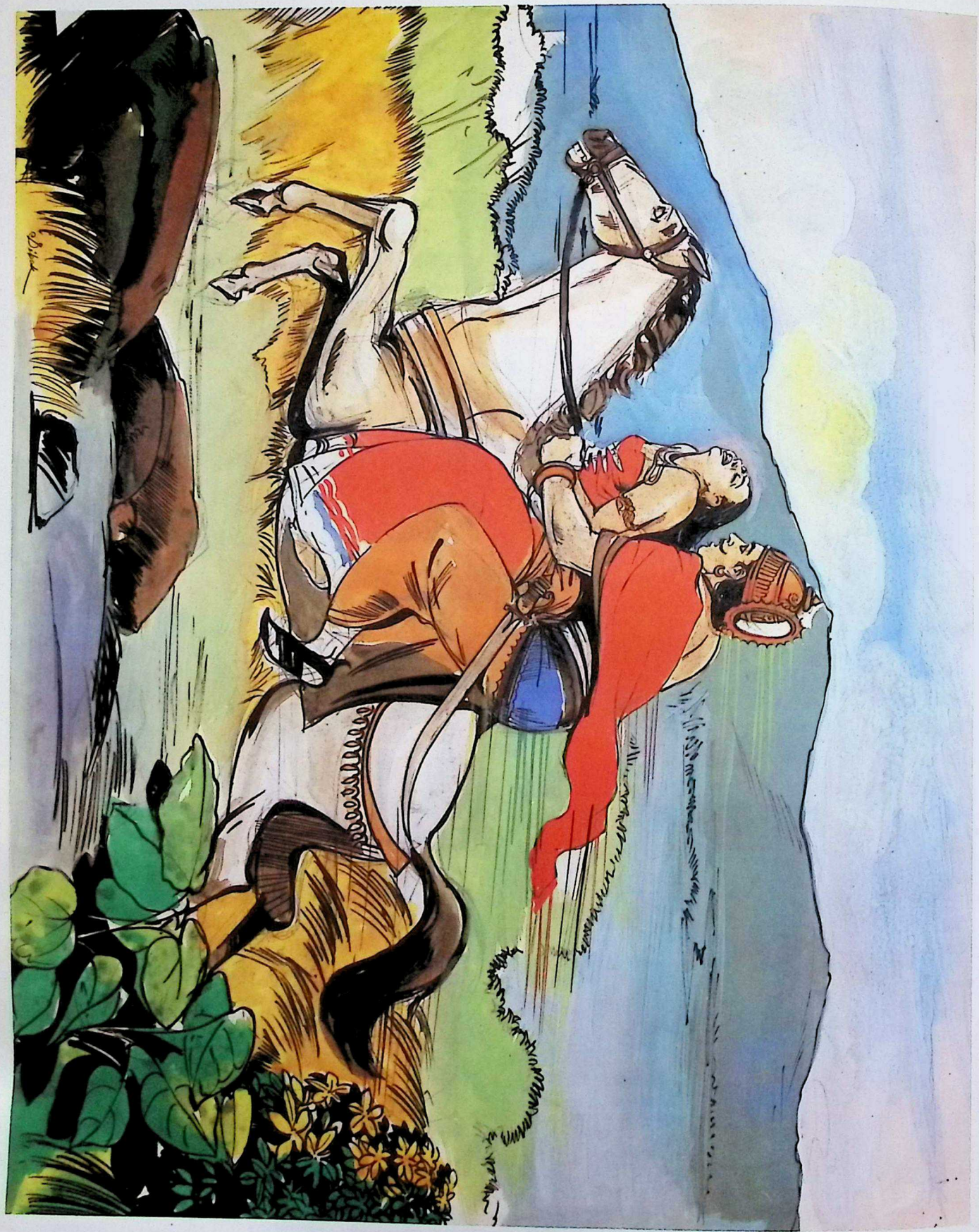

Prince Sugatra with Princess Sumana Escaping Towards Kalinga

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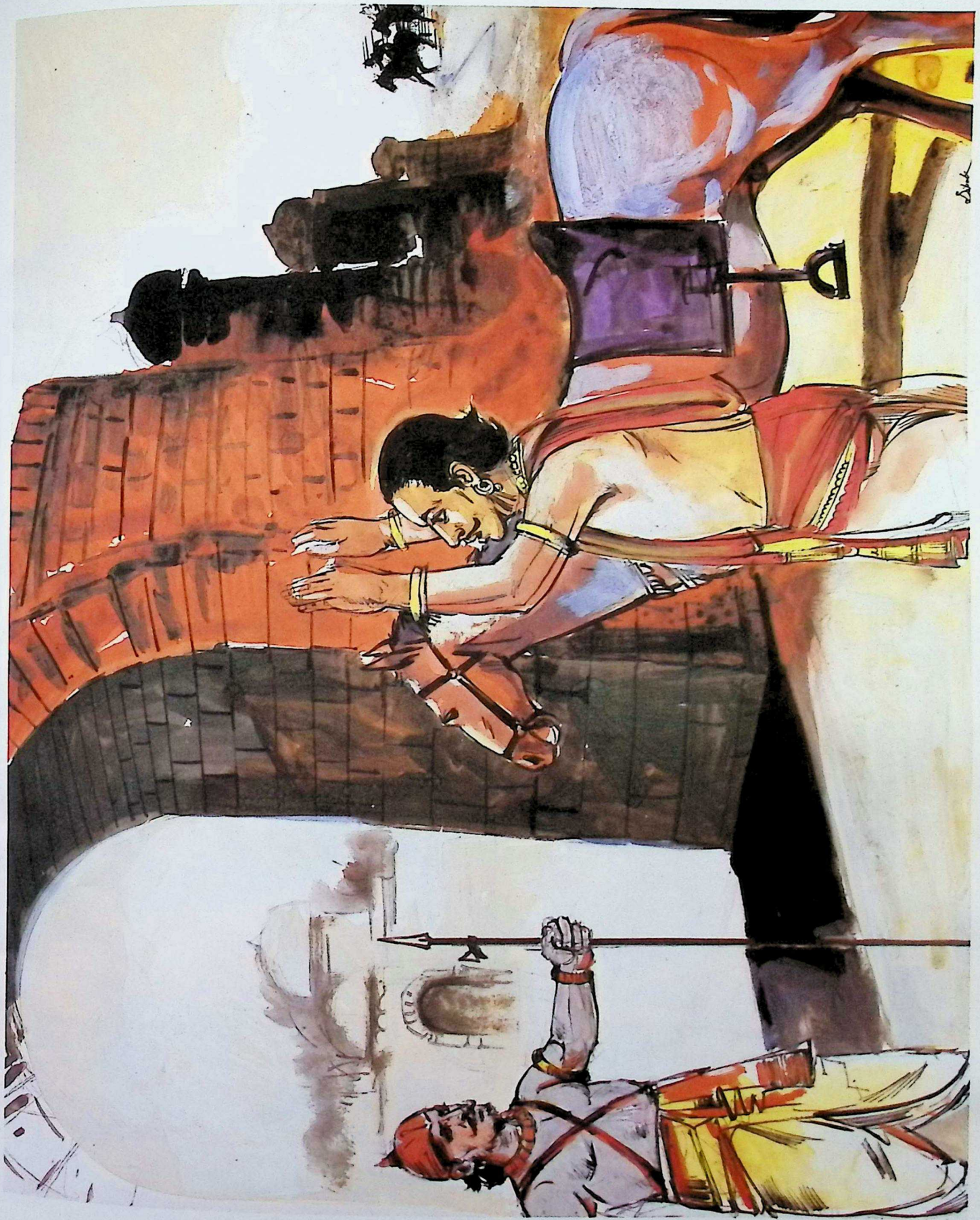

Prince Sugatra Outside Kalinga Frontier Checkpost

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4th Maid "His mind is as hard as stone. He has no liking for any. How good and gentle was the Crown Prince Susima towards all of us ? How good were all his other brothers ! We are unlucky to serve such a Master who does not knowhow to smile, how to look kindly, how to talk sweet words, and to behave gently !"

The Fifth Girl stands up, bends down a branch of the Asoka Plant, breaks it and brings it down to ground. She places it in front of others and starts crushing it under her feet. She speaks angrily as she tramples over the branch, full of leaves.

5th Maid "You are wasting your words. Let me show in action my attitude towards King Asoka. As I crush this Asoka Branch under my feet, my soul takes the deepest delight that I am showing my hatred towards the King Asoka by my action in jumping over the Asoka branch."

She laughs. Other maids also join her in joy and in clapping over her jumping action.

Asoka advances towards the Maids in silent steps when the Girl is still kicking the ground over the Asoka Branch and its leaves. He removes his veil from his face. The Maids raise their eyes upward and see Asoka standing. Mortal fear overtakes the trembling girls. They lie down flat at his feet, weeping, lamenting and beating their heads on earth.

Asoka ""Do you now see the monster, the tiger, the wild animal and the cobra before you ? Would you now like to dance over the body of Asoka as you are dancing over the branch of the Asoka Tree ?"

Asoka claps. A dozen armed soldiers appear running towards him.

Asoka "Take these wretched Maids to the bank of the river. Remove their heads from their shoulders and throw their bodies to deep waters. Or, better still, burn them alive ! Do it at once."

The Maids catch hold of the Emperor's feet and cry for mercy.

Maids "We are your slaves. Have pity on us. Give us mercy. We shall go out of the Palace never to return. Spare our lives. God is there to give you rewards for your kindness and mercy. Emperor, do not kill us, We are women."

Asoka (*furious*) "Women ! You can be more dangerous than men. You are vomiting venom against your King in the Palace. You are capable of any mischief. You are all agents of Susima. Go to Hell and wait for your master who will soon meet you there."

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The Maids cry and scream as the soldiers tie up their hands and drag them out. Soldiers beat them up to silence them.

One Maid (*Shouting at the top of her voice*) "This Man is not Asoka. He is Chandasoka. He is a Monster in human form."

Other Maids "Chandasoka. You are Chandasoka, You are Chandasoka."

Their shouts echo around the Palace.

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Episode Twenty-One

Commentary

Asoka resorts to inhuman acts in order to suppress rebellion and restlessness against his rule. His cruelty is symbolised in the erection of a torture centre called the 'Hell'. Standing outside the Capital City of Pataliputra the Hell became soon infamous as a place of death. Asoka delays his Coronation because of the fratricidal war.

Scene 1

Temple: Interior **Dharma, Radhagupta, Tishya, Priests**

Inside a temple of Siva, Queen Dharma with Radhagupta and Tishya Rakshita are performing the Puja. The Priests of the Temple are chanting mantras. After the Puja is over they come out.

Scene 2

Exterior **Same**

Radhagupta is discussing with Dharma and Tishya about Asoka's inhuman conduct and unnatural cruelty as a King. Dharma is in tears.

Radhagupta "Rajmata ! It is only you and you alone who can restore the mind of the Emperor to order. You alone can restrain him from excessive cruelty. He does not know to obey anyone on earth, except perhaps his mother."

Dharma "Mahamantri ! I have been shocked to hear about the massacre of the maids. Not even a sea of my tears can ever wipe out this blot from the fair name of my son."

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Radhagupta "More shocking than this is that the Emperor himself could cut off the head of a Minister when he came to pray for mercy to those unfortunate women."

Tishya "What use for us in discussing these issues here ! Rajmata and the Prime Minister together can prevail upon the angry Emperor to abstain from such deeds. That will yield result."

Dharma and Radhagupta look towards each other.

Scene 3

Asoka's Apartment **Asoka, Dharma, Tishya**

Dharma is in tearful eyes. Radhagupta looks brave but also fearful. Tishya is looking cunning. Asoka looks angry. They are all seated.

Asoka "They say I am Chandasoka ! So shall I be. Asoka will work like a monster. Your advice to me to become a kind Asoka instead of being a cruel Asoka will not save me or my Empire from ruins.'

Dharma "My son, there is no greater virtue in a monarch than mercy ! By your mercy you can win the heart of your servants and your subjects. Those wretched girls could have been mercifully forgiven."

Radhagupta "Your Majesty ! It is not becoming on the part of the Chakravarti Monarch to use your own sword against a Minister when the executioners could have done the job. I beg your forgiveness for saying so."

Asoka (*agitated*) "What for then do I hold a sword ? There come moments when a king has to use it. If a suspected person stands before me, I have to remove him by sword, not by folded hands."

Tishya "Your Majesty ! A King's word is more powerful than a thousand swords in his armoury."

Asoka "Yes, I agree. Hereafter, therefore, let my words be my thousand swords. I have by now learnt to believe in the Kautilyan dictum that Fear is the Basis of the State. Terror is the weapon of a King. As long as peace is not restored, let terror be the order of the day. Let me live down to posterity as a Monster of Cruelty -- a Chandasoka."

Asoka walks away. Others heave a deep sigh of sadness.

Scene 4

Night: Bank of Ganga **Asoka**

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It is night. Asoka is walking alone on the deserted bank of river Ganga under a thick veil. He is passing by a forlorn cottage adjacent to the river bank. He hears some mysterious voice from inside, a voice of painful utterances. He stops, feels suspicious, and proceeds towards the hut.

Scene 5

Hut: Interior **Brahmin, Asoka**

Inside the hut, an old Brahman is lamenting over the sins of his life looking towards the rows of pictures hanging on the wall. A lamp is burning inside. Asoka enters silently and observes the conduct of the Brahmin. The Brahmin is turning his eyes from picture to picture and uttering his words of repentance. He is not aware of the presence of Asoka at the small door.

Brahmin "Oh God Yama ! Oh the God of Death ! Do not throw me to your torture chambers for many many acts of my sins. I have neglected my old mother, I have robbed poor pilgrims, I have cheated my relatives, I have molested a young widow, I have stolen food from temples, I have been cruel to infants, I have beaten my wife a hundred times, I have told many lies ! Oh God Yama, I now tremble to think of your Hell where I have to suffer punishment for all that I have done in this life. Oh, Yama, allow me to do penance in this old age, and spare me of your torture chambers."

He kneels down before a picture of Yama. Next, he puts his head on the ground and starts weeping. When he gets up, he finds a strange looking man standing behind him.

Asoka "Brahmin ! What are these horrible-looking pictures hanging on your walls ?"

Brahmin "Don't you know ! These are the pictures of the torture chambers of God Yama inside the Hell ! Do see, how dreadful are the methods of punishment in the Hell. And, if you are a sinner, do remember that after your death you have to enter into any of these chambers or into several of them."

The Brahmin holds the lamp in his hand and shows to Asoka picture after picture while explaining the nature of the Hell.

Brahmin "Look, this picture contains the scene of torture to liers; this is for cheats; this is for thieves; this is for murderers; this torture is for those who neglect their parents, teachers and holy men; this punishment is for illicity affairs; and this is for doing injustice to infants and orphans. These are the other scenes of torture for other kind of sins. For every sin, Yama has prescribed a mode of torture."

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Asoka intently observes picture after picture with curiosity.

Asoka "Wonderful punishments for wrong-doers ! How horrible, how painful, how terrible !"

Brahman "Who will fear the God of Death if His Hell does not prescribe most severe tortures to sinners ? It is the fear of Hell which keeps the mankind within bounds ! Every man is wicked by nature. It is only fear that keeps him in control ! The fear of Hell makes man moral. Had there been no Hell, everyone could be a brute and this beautiful earth would have been converted by men to a jungle of lawlessness and disorder and a horrible place for living ! Do you understand, my friend ?"

Asoka is looking thoughtful. The Brahmin puts the lamp on the floor and goes out to attend to his cows.

Asoka (*to himself*) "So, it is the fear of Hell which keeps mankind on a correct path ! It is the Hell that makes man fearful and law-abiding ! Excellent indeed ! I shall erect a Hell on earth to strike terror to every heart so that the fear of torture will keep my enemies and my subjects in mortal fear. Let them find in me a living Yama !"

Asoka goes out quietly as the Brahmin comes back.

Scene 6

Asoka's Apartment **Asoka, A General**

Asoka is reclining on a couch. A General comes in and bows his head.

Asoka "I have summoned you for doing a specific work for me. I want you to discover a man whom you can safely describe as a most cruel person of my whole domain. I need such a person -- one who takes pleasure in cruelty and can commit any ghastly deed without any prick of conscience. Discover a man who does not possess in him an iota of pity, sympathy, kindness or goodness."

The General expresses considerable surprise in his face and goes out.

Scene 7

Forest: Lakeside Ghat **Girika, General, Girika's Mother, 2 Soldiers**

Inside a forest, on the side of a lake, is seen a terrible-looking man, busy with his work. At a distance, under a tree, are standing Asoka's General and two soldiers. They are observing the acts of that wild man who is doing several works simultaneously. He is throwing a fishing rod with hook in the lake to catch fish. He has spread a net with grains beneath to attract birds. He is taking out the skin of a living deer. He has put a trap to catch rabbits. He has suspended from

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the branch of a tree a bleeding boar which is alive, and has put fire under its body to roast it. He is throwing stones at the birds on the net killing them one by one. He is most active in performing all his works at a time. The General advances towards him and stands before him.''

General ''Brave man ! What is your name ?''

Girika ''My name is Girika.''

General ''I am coming from the King. The King needs a stout and active man like you to serve him. He will give you a very good job.

Fortune will smile on you. Would you like to come with me ?''

Girika (*standing up*) ''Are you speaking truth that the King needs a man like me ? How can I serve him ? What kind of job for a hunter like me ?''

General ''That the King will tell you when you come to his palace.''

Girika (*jumping with joy*) ''Palace ! Shall I live in the palace ? I must go with you at once.''

General ''By the way, don't you feel pity for this living boar which you want to roast ? Don't you feel for this deer which is struggling for life while you are flaying it alive. Don't you pity these wounded birds on your net ?''

Girika ''Pity ! What is that thing ? Why should I feel anything while doing my job ?''

General ''Do you ever torture a man or a woman when you are angry with him or her ?''

Girika ''Yes, yes. I take out their eyes or cut their fingers if and when thoughtless persons come to annoy me.''

General ''Do you like and love children ?''

Girika ''When I find them, I kick them to sky and see them fall crying.''

General ''You are a brave man indeed ! The King needs a man like you. You will be rewarded.''

Girika looks towards his hut at a distance and shouts at his old mother.

Girika ''Are you still sleeping my lazy mother ? Come out quickly. I am wanted by the King. Look after these creatures. I am going.''

An old woman is seen running out of the hut. She comes near to his son.

Mother ''What do you say, my stupid son ! You want to go to the King, leaving behind your old mother alone in this forest ? Do you want me to die in starvation or be eaten up by tigers ? No, you cannot go.''

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Girika "Here is the King's man, standing before you. He says, the King needs me in his palace and I have decided to go."

Mother "Oh dear ! Don't be stupid. You have to stay with me, not with the King. The king will kill you when he comes to know of your conduct. I won't allow you to go and die."

The old woman stands in front of her son. Girika administers a heavy blow to her and she falls down heavily upon a rock. She cries aloud in pain while bleeding. Unmindful, Girika walks ahead.

Mother "Stop, stop Girika. I shall run behind you if you go to the King."

She gets up and runs behing her son. As she comes near, Girika swings his axe threateningly.

Girika "I shall cut you to pieces if you advance a step further. I want to be the King's man. Nobody can stop me."

The old woman stops. Girika walks fast with the General and his soldiers.

General (*to himself*) "There cannot be a more depraved and cruel man than this abnormal brute. Thank God, I have found out an ideal person to serve the King's need."

Scene 8

Inside the newly erected 'Hell' outside Pataliputra and adjacent to a forest are seen the horror-chambers within a spacious compound, surrounded by high walls. Different chambers contain different instruments of torture -- Boiling couldrons containing oil, Stone grinders of huge size, Heavy nails of iron and heavy chains, Scaffolds with axes, Hammers to crush limbs, and big Tenter-hooks hanging from roofs, etc. Unfortunate victims, suspected as rebels, traitors or the King's critics, are being dragged inside the chambers by ferocious-looking attendants of Girika who is working as the Keeper of the Hell.

Scene 9

Kapilavastu Monastery: Exterior **Yasas, Mahindra, Sanghamitra**

In the twilight of the dusk are seen Sanghamitra and Mahindra, holding the hands of Yasas, outside the Kapilavastu Monastery.

Sanghamitra "Uncle ! You have been always saying that my mother will come to us any time. Many months have passed, but she is not coming. Are you hiding something about our mother ? Uncle, tell me the truth. Why is she not coming ? I always remember her, I see her in dreams."

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Mahindra — "Uncle ! My father is the Emperor of Magadh. Kapilavastu is not very far from his capital. Why is he not coming to see us here ? Does an Emperor forget his son and daughter ? Does he always think of his subjects and finds no time to remember us ?"

Yasas — "Dear Mahindra ! You know that I sent a message to your father that I am taking you both to Kapilavastu. I am sure the messenger never reached Pataliputra. That is the only reason why your father has not come here to see you. He does not know where you are."

Mahindra — "Why didn't you send another message ?"

Yasas — "My boy ! I have not done so out of fear. If the messenger is detected and caught by the enemy, they will fall upon this holy place."

Sanghamitra — "Uncle ! You could bring us thus far in disguise as tribal children. Why not take us from here as beggar-children to Pataliputra ? We can walk that far, begging and singing."

Yasas — "No, dear, no. It will be dangerous to go to the King's capital in that way. Beggars are known to local people of their respective areas. You will appear as new beggars and your faces will prove you are different."

Mahindra — "Then, do you say that we shall never in near future come to see our parents and they too should know nothing about us ?"

Sanghamitra — "Perhaps my mother has thought we too are dead after leaving Ujjayini. Perhaps therefore both our father and mother have wiped out our memory from their busy mind."

Yasas wipes out tear from his eyes and looks thoughtful.

Yasas — "Dear Mahindra and Mitra ! Will you allow me to go to Pataliputra to meet your parents and inform them about your stay here ?"

Sanghamitra — "No, uncle, no. We cannot send you to dangers."

Yasas (*laughing*) — "Dangers to Yasas ! Oh, dear, I shall face no danger on my way to Pataliputra. I shall overcome every danger in Pataliputra to reach your parents. I can go there as a trader, a monk, an astrologer, a foreigner, a soldier, a magician or even as an enemy agent. I can meet the Emperor and the Empress at any place, at any time, and in any form. They will recognise me from any distance. But, I can go to them only if you willingly allow me to go."

Sanghamitra — "Uncle ! If you decide to go, we shall not stand on your way. But you have to promise that you shall come back at the earliest. I shall count the days every morning and every night."

Yasas — "My dear ones ! You go for your meals. Let me obtain the permission from the Sannyasi to go to Pataliputra. He may feel happy when he hears that I am going to meet the Sakya Kumari, his dearest disciple."

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Sanghamitra "Uncle ! Take your own time to return. But when you come back, bring my mother with you. We can wait from summer to winter and from winter to summer to see our dear mother."

They go inside.

Scene 10

Night: Interior **Upagupta, Yasas**

Inside his prayer room Sannyasi Upagupta is sitting cross-legged after his meditation hour. A small earthen lamp is emiting faint light from a corner. Yasas enters and sits before the Sannyasi.

Upagupta (*looking sad*) "Yasas ! I have heard from my monks who have come from Pataliputra all about the painful situation there. My heart is broken to pieces. Should such endless bloodshed continue in the land of the Tathagata Buddha ? He only knows the reason. I shudder to think that the Emperor could be so violent as to kill numerous innocent persons ! I am sorry to hear that he is described as Chandasoka."

Yasas "Your Holiness ! Is there any news about the Sakya Kumari ?"

Upagupta "Frantic searches are going on all over the Empire. But, nobody knows where has she been kept ! I cannot think of anything. Oh, Buddha ! Give her the strength to bear her *karmic* sufferings with peace of mind. Save her from dangers and disasters !"

Yasas "Your Holiness ! As I know Asoka, he must be feeling desperate not to know about the whereabouts of Devi and the children. I feel guilty that I am far away from him in these moments of his terrible distress. If you bless me to go to Pataliputra, I can restore peace in Asoka's mind with the information that his children are alive and in the custody of your great self. I can also try my level best to ascertain the whereabouts of Devi in my own way."

Upagupta "What you say is correct. The Emperor is getting more and more violent due to his inner sorrow and restlessness. If you go to him you can be of great help to him. Give him my advice to rise above his distressing thoughts of the time. Tell him that Upagupta will look after the royal children with all care and affection. They are more precious to me than to their mother."

Scene 11

Asoka's Apartment **Asoka, Radhagupta**

Asoka and Radhagupta are in discussion about the Emperor's Coronation.

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Radhagupta "Your Majesty ! It is time that we celebrate the Coronation without any further delay. Doubts of any nature must be removed from the mind of the subjects. They must know that the Emperor's Crown is sanctified by religious rituals and the priestly rites. It is politically inadvisable that the Chakravarti Monarch shall rule the country without a Crown on his head. Everybody knows that there is a difference between accession to the throne and the wearing of a Crown in the coronation. Coronation will also demoralise the enemy completely. Let them not feel that the King is afraid of a Crown because of his brother's claim to it. They say that it is easy to capture the throne but difficult to wear a Crown."

Asoka "I appreciate what you say. But I have to think from a different point of view. What will the people say if I put the Crown on my head before I have crushed my enemies ? What will they feel if I celebrate my coronation before I have been able to rescue my beloved wife and dear children ? Let not anybody say that Asoka is a coward ! Let not any soul feel that I am selfish ! Therefore, let my Coronation wait till I have won victory and till I have recovered my dear ones. This decision is final. Inform the council of ministers and the royal priests that on this issue I shall have no second thought."

Asoka gets up and goes out.

Scene 12

Bank of Ganga **Yasas, Two Mauryan Officers**

Sun is about to rise on the eastern horizon. Near Pataliputra, on the bank of river Ganga, there is a special bathing ghat for the seclect ladies of the Capital. There is a Siva Temple near to the ghat.

In between the ghat and the temple, under a big tree is sitting Yasas in disguise as a Holy Man. His head is clean shaven, his forhead is marked with red sandalwood paste. He is seated on a tiger-skin. Two Mauryan Officers of rank come near to him. Yasas is sitting cross-legged and chanting hymns.

1st Officer "Oh you fool ! Don't you see it is a protected area, containing a special bathing ghat for the palace maidens, wives of the nobles and courtiers ? They will soon come to take their holy dip in the Ganga on this auspicious Siva Ratri day before offering puja in the temple of Siva ? No man is allowed to see them bathing. Clear out from this place."

Yasas looks to their forehead with penetrating eyes.

Yasas "Oh, you sinners ! You ask a Sadhu to go away. But one of you has a sinful mind to see the beauties taking bath to satisfy your lust ! You have come like a Krishna to observe the Gopis in water ! Am I wrong ? Confess your sin before I curse you !"

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The two Officers look at each other, each one thinking that the other one has come with a lustful mind.

Yasas "Do repent for your sinful thought. I shall not curse you on this holy Siva Ratri day. Take this holy ash I have brought from the Himalayan Temple of Siva. I bless you for your prosperity both in health and wealth. Tell your ladies whom you know when they come for their holy dip to come to me for holy ashes. Go."

Yasas puts some ash on the palms of the two Officers who kneel down to receive it. They take dust from the Sadhu's feet and go away. Soon they are seen talking to some women who are coming out of the river after bath. Within a brief time, a line of ladies eagerly await to receive ashes from Yasas.

As the women are coming to Yasas one by one, he is keenly observing their faces as if to find someone he knows. At last his eyes catch the face of Tishya Rakshita who is seen with other maids of the palace for receiving the holy ash. As she comes near to Yasas and kneels down for the Sadhu's blessings, Yasas looks at her forehead with wide open eyes for several moments. Tishya feels annoyed for the delay.

Tishya "Why do you look to my forehead like this ? You are a Sadhu and I am a young virgin ! Is it worthy of you to observe my face like this ?"

Yasas (*softly*) "Dear young beauty ! A Sadhu is not looking at your lovely face, but at your forehead which shows signs of incalculable fortune !"

Tishya "Do you know reading the foreheads ? Holy Man, please tell me what do you read !"

Yasas "Take me to your house, my dear queen of great fortunes ! I can tell you many things. This is not the place where I can read your palm."

The two Mauryan Officers with their wives come and fall flat at the feet of Yasas to receive blessings. Tishya looks at them.

Tishya "Take the Sadhu to my father's house before I return home after performing my puja in the Temple."

She moves towards the Temple with a happy face. Yasas gets up and is escorted by the Officers on the road.

Scene 13

Tishya's House: Interior **Tishya, Yasas**

Tishya Rakshita is consulting Yasas about her future. Yasas is holding her palm and reading the signs.

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Yasas "Miss ! You have fallen in love with a hero who has developed his liking for you if not love !"

Tishya (*in surprise*) "A hero ! Can you read from my palm who he can be ?"

Yasas "Yes, I am reading it. But I do not believe what the signs indicate. The hero is as great as Indra. In other words, he is greater than a King."

Tishya "You mean a Samrat ?"

Yasas "Yes, he is a Samrat. But there is only one Chakravarti Samrat in whole Bharat and he is Asoka. Did you see him alone at a very distant place in a fullmoon night ?"

Tishya "Please go on, Holy Man, go on. Let me hear something more from your readings !"

Yasas laughs.

Yasas "Well, my dear Tishya ! I thought you to be an intelligent girl. But today I realise that you are as brainless as any ordinary one. I saw you at the cross-roads of Ujjayini for a few moments only, but I could recognise you from your face from among hundreds of girls on the river ghat even if I saw you as a boy ! But, you fail to recognise me because I look like a monk. You fail to remember my voice even after so much of useless talking ?"

Tishya "Oh my God ! You are Yasas ! How do you waste your intelligence by coming to me when the Emperor is so anxious for you ? Please run to him to tell him about the children. What business had you to waste time on the river bank ?"

Yasas "Tishya ! I have my reason in wasting my time which you need not know. My presence here will be known only to you and to none else. Nobody knows me in Pataliputra. I also never saw this place. It is my good luck that I have discovered you the night after my arrival. Please take me to the King this night."

Tishya "The Emperor's happiness will know no bounds to see you. He will have a new life when he hears about his children from your lips. I shall take you to him as an astrologer this very evening."

Yasas "No, not in that way. Take me to the Emperor as a suspect, as an agent of Susima, so that nobody comes to know anything about our relation. Let nobody come to imagine that the royal children are in my custody. Let the crowds of Pataliputra see my face in their streets as an enemy of Asoka. Arrange accordingly by applying your brain."

Tishya looks at Yasas with deep admiration.

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Episode Twenty-Two

Commentary

A trap is finally prepared to lure Prince Susima to invade Pataliputra and capture the Throne. As a part of the plan, the news of Asoka's fatal illness is circulated far and wide in order to create a false impression that the Throne is about to fall vacant.

Scene 1

Palace Gate **Yasas, Soldiers, Crowds**

Six soldiers are dragging Yasas in chains through the gate of the palace. Yasas is expressing signs of deep pain. He shouts, looking at the crowds at the gate.

Yasas "You, the silent citizens of Pataliputra ! See, how these devils are dragging me to a monster. I am ready to die in Chandasoka's Hell, but not to see that monster of cruelty."

Yasas struggles to escape, but is beaten up. Crowds gather to observe his suffering. Among the crowds are seen some of the agents of Susima.

A Soldier "You scoundrel ! You, the agent of our enemy ! You will be certainly taken to the Hell for torture and death. But, before that, go and confess before His Majesty the guilt you have committed and about the man for whom you are working."

People observe in silence as Yasas is dragged inside.

Scene 2

Asoka's Private Apartment **Asoka, Yasas**

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Yasas is thrown at the feet of Asoka in heavy chains. Asoka waves his hand and the soldiers go away.

For moments Asoka and Yasas look at each other. Yasas' eyes are full of tears. Asoka embraces him in deep emotion and unties his chains to release his hands.

Asoka (*with choked voice*) "Yasas, my friend ! Can I believe my own eyes that you are in my presence ! Tell me, how are Mahindra and Sanghamitra ?"

Yasas (*with tears*) "Aryaputra ! My messenger from Ujjayini could not reach you to inform that I am taking the children to Kapilavastu. They are in excellent health. They are happy too. But it is Sanghamitra who always thinks of her mother."

Asoka wipes his tears.

Asoka "Yes, she is thinking of her mother ! And, what about me ? I am accursed as a king not to be able to recover my beloved wife so far ! All my attempts have failed."

Yasas "I can fathom the depth of your sorrow. But, from now on, I shall not rest for a moment till I find her out. I pray for a free hand to work out my plan. I have also to pray that you have to forget that you are the Chakravarti Emperor and subject yourself to follow my directions without hesitation."

Asoka (*with emotion*) "You are my friend, my only friend. Do as you like to rescue Devi. I shall obey your order with utmost pleasure."

Yasas "Not merely to rescue Devi that I shall work, but also to destroy Susima. From now on, I shall be acting as your enemy. It is by being your enemy that I can reach your real enemy. And, I feel it intuitively that the devil has kept Devi in his hideous."

Asoka "What will happen if Susima suspects you ? Can I allow you to reach him knowing it fully well that his suspicion will result in your death ? No, do not try to reach him."

Yasas (*smiling*) "My life is not as precious as Devi's life ! Yasas knows how to die for her. Please give me a free hand."

Asoka maintains silence. Yasas continues.

Yasas "I shall take Tishya Rakshita part into confidence. I shall disclose only a part of my plan to Radhagupta. And, very little to you."

Asoka (*smiling*) "If you feel so confident of your strategy, you may go ahead on your mission. I shall have no objection to whatever you do for sake of Devi."

Yasas "Since you have given your consent that I shall have a free hand, I shall begin my game right now. Aryaputra, it is my request to you to fall sick

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from this very night. This sickness will grow day after day till a time comes when the whole Empire knows that the Emperor Asoka is soon going to die. It is only this news of your impending death can bring out Susima from his unknown dungeon in the hope of capturing the Throne. I shall myself go to bring him to Pataliputra, with Your Majesty either dying or dead."

Asoka (*surprised*) "What a terrible game are you going to play, my friend ?"

Yasas "Yes, Aryaputra ! It is a game of death. You have to pretend death. I have to face death. And, Susima will meet the real death."

Asoka "Obeying your command, I shall fall ill from this very night. But will you not come to me of and on to inform me of your progress ?"

Yasas "No, Aryaputra ! I am already your sworn enemy ! How can I come to die here ? I shall come back only after the enemy is no more. From this night, let Tishya Rakshita be appointed as the chief of the palace maids and servants. She alone will come to you, no other maid."

Asoka "In what role will you be seen hereafter ?"

Yasas "From here I go to Girika's Hell as a suspect, and from there, who knows in what disguise -- may be a merchant-prince, a Taxilan rebel, a Kalingan agent, or a Susima man - but always as an enemy of Chakravarti Asoka."

Asoka (*surprised*) "From here to Girika's Hell ? And that too in chains ? He may grind your bones to dust or burn you alive as a dry piece of fire-wood. Please go to any other place from the palace gate, but not to Hell."

Yasas (*getting up*) "Aryaputra ! You have already loosened my chains. I know how to jump over Girika's Hell in order to reach dear Devi's prison cell. Let your soldiers take me to Hell. Time is up."

Asoka looks wonder-struck. He claps. Two soldiers come in.

Asoka "Take this wretch to Girika. Ask him to keep him confined for some days till he changes his mind to confess the truth to me."

Soldiers drag away Yasas from the Emperor's presence.

Scene 3

Gate of 'Hell'

Yasas, Girika, Soldiers

Yasas in chains is being dragged by two soldiers to the Gate of Girika's Hell. He is shouting abusive words against Chandasoka. People observe him on the road. At length, he is thrown at the Gate of the Hell. There stands the demon-like Girika to receive the victim.

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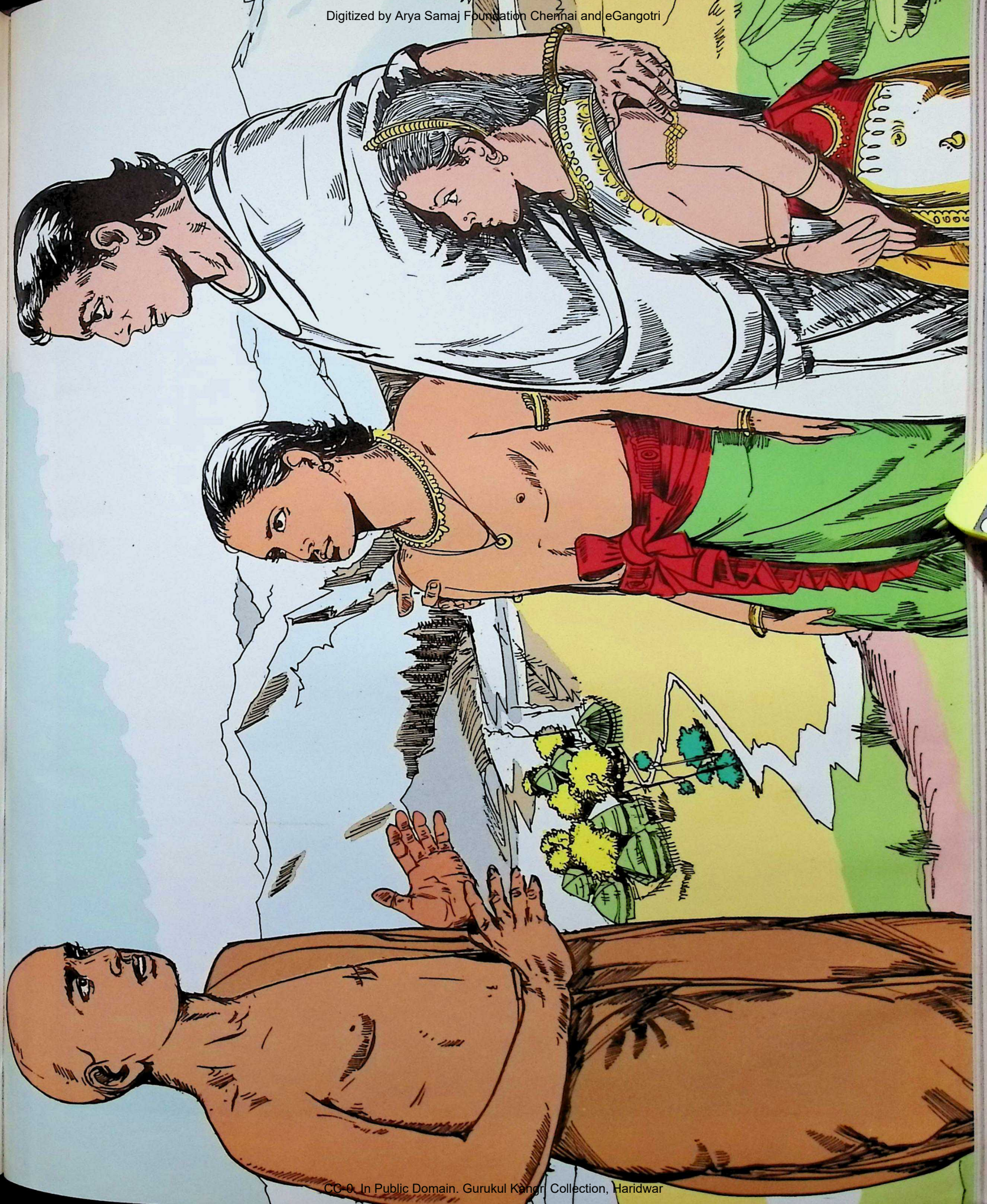

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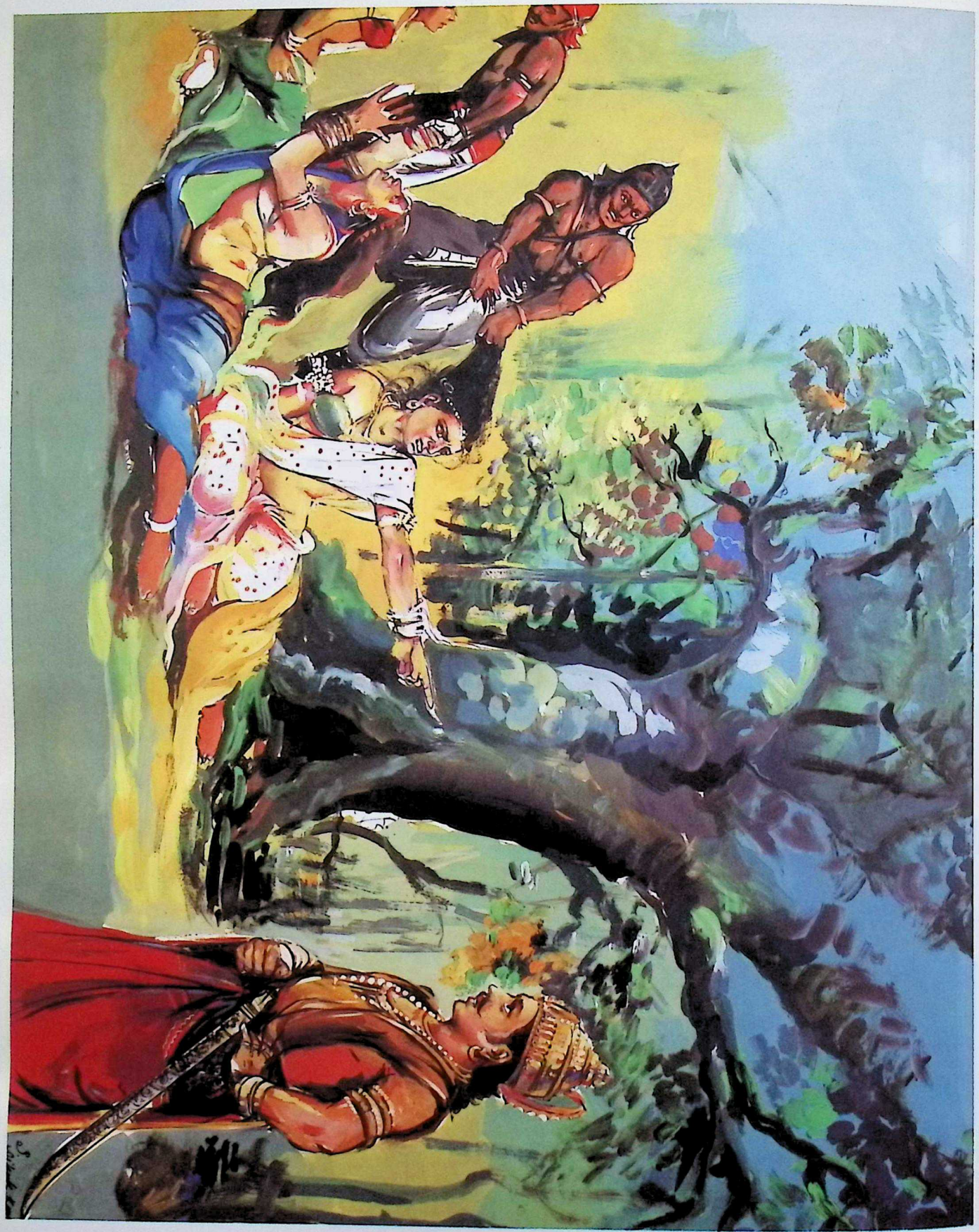

Asoka Orders Execution of Palace Maids

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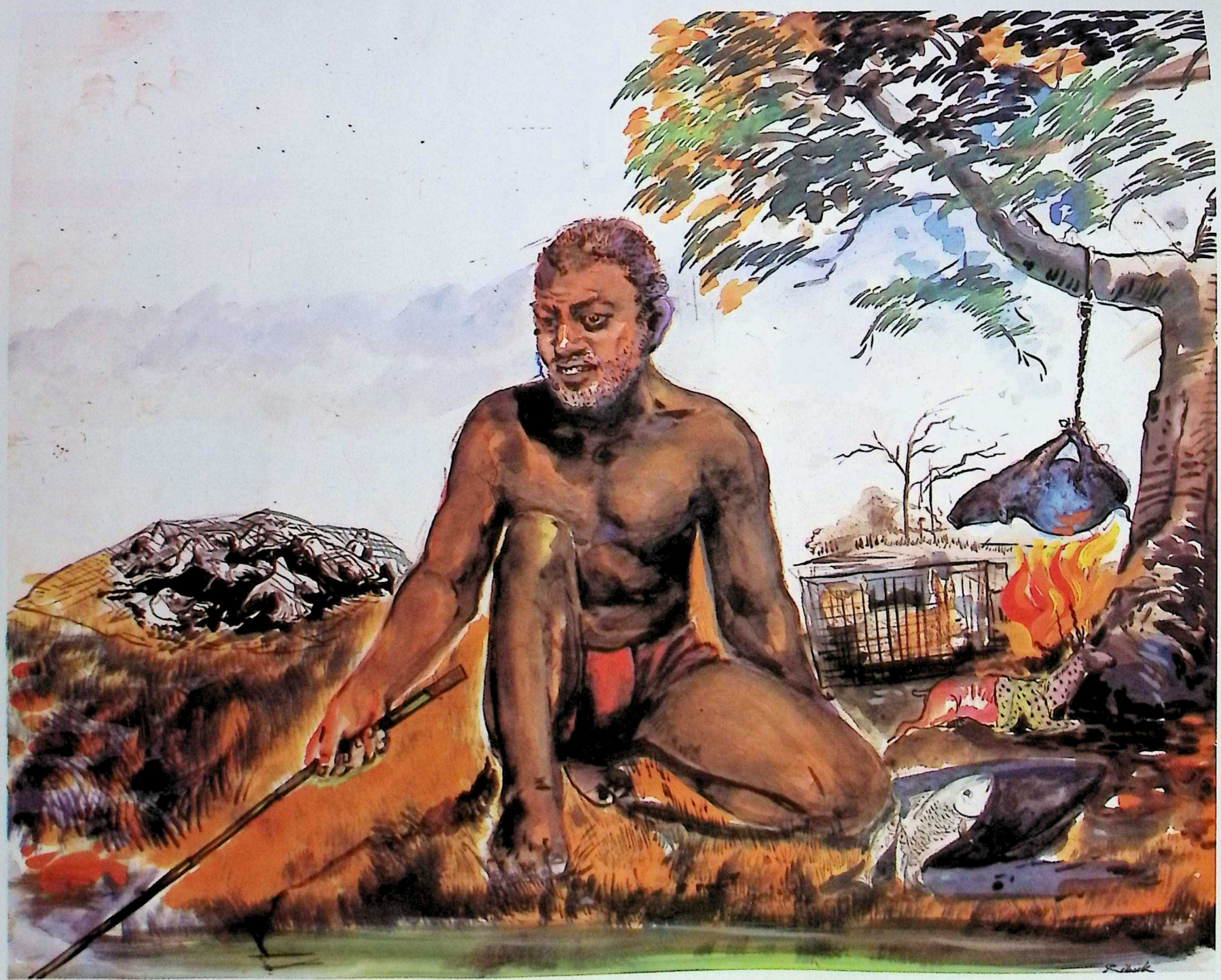

Girika in Action as a Monster of Cruelty

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Girika "A very big body indeed ! You can endure my methods quite for some days. What a pleasure to see you !"

Yasas "So you are the Chanda-Girika of Chanda-Asoka ?"

Girika (*furious*) "What do you say ? You dare call me Chanda-Girika ? In moments your tongue will be offered to the crows."

Yasas throws down the chains and snatches away the axe from Girika's hand. He waves and circles the axe furiously, kicks down the two soldiers, and runs away swiftly towards the dense jungles outside. As nobody comes near the Hell out of fear of that place, Yasas makes an easy escape.

Girika (*shouting*) "My torturers ! Come out from your dens, you fools ! The victim has escaped, what a pity ! What will the Master say ? I shall punish you all."

Furiously he runs inside the compound. The two bleeding soldiers get up from ground but find Yasas nowhere in sight.

Scene 4

Night: Tishya's House **Yasas, Tishya**

In an underground chamber in Tishya's house, Yasas is in discussion with Tishya in the night. He removes his false cover of shaven-head from his scalp and looks different. Tishya observes him with curiosity.

Tishya "Let me inform you that the King has appointed me today as the chief of his palace maids and also as the head of the household affairs. I feel proud of myself."

Yasas "How nice to hear this ! I am sure, you can do your work well."

Tishya "Please tell me, is it a part of your plan ?"

Yasas "Oh no, never. It is only a proof of the King's confidence in you and his liking for you. Your new position appears to me as that of a queen. You are the nearest person to him, and the most beloved one !"

Tishya "Are you now a friend or a foe of the King ?"

Yasas "A foe of course ! Tomorrow morning you will find me as a merchant-prince of Kasi, living in a big mansion in Pataliputra."

Tishya "A merchant-prince ! A man of great wealth ?"

Yasas "Yes, dear Tishya. Inform the Emperor that Yasas possesses plentiful of diamonds and pearls which belonged to his treasury in Ujjayini."

Tishya "What are you goint to do with that ?"

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Yasas "Since I cannot use my sword for the Emperor, I shall use the Emperor's gold to serve his cause. Listen, I propose to collect the most beautiful dancers of Pataliputra in my mansion to entertain me. Would you name the most famous and the most attractive dancer of your city to whom I can invite with her group ?''

Tishya "She is of course Basavadatta, the most celebrated of the singers and dancers of Magadh.''

Yasas "Basavadatta ! It is a name to fall in love with. If her name sounds so sweet, how much more sweet can be her performance !''

Yasas gets up to go. Tishya looks on with admiration and wonder.

Scene 5

Night: Asoka's Bedroom **Asoka, Tishya, Vaidyaraj**

Asoka is lying on his sick bed. Tishya brings in a Vaidyaraj. The Vaidyaraj proceeds near to the King's bed.

Tishya "Your Majesty ! The Vaidyaraj wants to read your pulse and to check your body heat.''

Asoka turns his face to the opposite side. Tishya leans over his body to hear his words of consent.

Asoka (*in low voice*) "Tell him to go away. I need no medicine. Find out that man from Girika's Hell who was brought to me this morning as an enemy agent. I suspect, he is a sorcerer. Find out, if he has done something on me.''

The Vaidyaraj overhears and looks stunned

Vaidyaraj "A sorcerer ! Of all persons a sorcerer in the palace ! Oh God ! How ominous ! What can a Vaidya do ?''

Tishya hears his muttering.

Tishya "What did you mutter ? What did you speak to yourself ?''

Vaidyaraj "No, nothing. I only offered my words of prayer. I shall be back tomorrow.''

Tishya "Vaidyaraj ! The Emperor's body is as hot as a boiling pot. Please leave your medicines with me and I shall try to persuade him to take.''

The Vaidyaraj takes out from his bag some packets containing medicine and hands over to Tishya.

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Scene 6

Night: Dharma' Room **Dharma, Vitasoka (Aged 27)**

Queen Dharma is offering her prayers to Vishnu when her second son, Prince Vitasoka comes in.

Vitasoka "Mother ! Should you fast and weep day after day like this till my brother recovers from illness. Please believe me, he will be soon out of his bed."

Dharma (*weeping*) "The maids say that it is a sorcerer who has cast his evil spell on Asoka. My heart breaks to hear this. Vitasoka, my son, what can any Vaidya do to cure your brother if evil spirits have taken over his body !'

She weeps bitterly and looks to the image of Vishnu.

Vitasoka "Mother ! How easy it is to ward off evil spirits if actually that is the cause of Asoka's illness. I shall proceed at once to the Himalayas to meet the holiest of the holy saints who can easily dispel all evil spells by a single *mantra* ! Please allow me to go to the Himalayan sacred caves to find the saints."

Dharma "Go, Vitasoka, go to any place you think necessary for the sake of your brother. God will bless you and bring you back safe."

Vitasoka takes dust from his mother's feet and goes out. Dharma turns to prayer.

Scene 7

Main Temple of Pataliputra **Priests**

Inside the sanctum sanctorum of the main temple of Pataliputra about 50 priests are chanting hymns constantly, praying for the Emperor's recovery.

Scene 8

Courtyard **Priests, Brahmans, Gluttons, Yasas as a cook, Volunteers**

Hundreds of priests and Brahmins are seen seated in rows to eat heavy meals being offered by the Imperial family as customary on occasions of illness of any rich man. In one line are seated about one hundred fat gluttons who are served heavy meals to satisfy their greed. A number of stout volunteers are serving item after item on the plates of the gluttons and others.

Yasas, in disguise as a cook, is moving from person to person and advising each one to eat

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as much as possible. He is seen whispering to many ears about the reason of the sumptuous feast. He looks sad and serious while talking to the gluttons in particular.

Yasas (*to a glutton*) "Dear friend ! Fill your stomach fully so that you can go to your home and do no other work except praying to the Gods at the top of your voice to save your King from illness. More you eat, more loud will be your prayer so that your voice can reach the ears of the Gods in Heaven. If the King survives, you will be fed again. If anything happens to him, you will earn the sin that you did not pray loudly and sincerely."

He moves from glutton to glutton whispering his message, and each one of them eats as much of meat, fish, sweets and other items to their fill. They nod their consent to Yasas's proposal.

Scene 9

City Market **Shop Owners, Customers, Traders, Susisma's Agents**

In the city centre, at the market place, people are talking in whispers about Asoka's mortal illness. Susima's agents are listening to the people with keen interest. They are moving from shop to shop and paying their ears to gossips and talks.

A Customer (*to shop keeper*) "You are cheating us everyday for your profit. Do you not realise that there is an invisible power to observe our sins ?"

Shop-Keeper "What do you mean, my friend ?"

Customer "I mean, if a King can suffer for cheating his brother, how can you escape suffering for cheating your customers ?"

Shop-Keeper "I understand what you mean. You say, if King Asoka is dying an untimely death for his crime against his brother Susima, so should I too die before time for cheating you ! No, my friend, no. I shall not die before time. I am not snatching away your property and possession. I am only taking a little profit to live myself. But Asoka snatched away his brother's Empire, Palace, and Throne ! So, why do you compare me with the King ?"

Susima's Agent "Dear friends ! What has happened to our beloved King ?"

A Customer "Call him Chandasoka, not our beloved King. He is dying of his vices. He is dying a tortuous death like his victims in his own Hell."

Shop-Keeper "These foolish gluttons, after eating to their heart's content, are praying for the King's recovery day and night at the top of their voice. But, we the citizens of Pataliputra and of Magadh, are praying silently for the death of a tyrant."

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The Agent of Susima moves from shop to shop to collect information from as many people as possible about Asoka's imminent death.

Scene 10

Old Mansion: Interior **Yasas, Basavadatta, 10 Dancing Girls**

In the outskirts of Pataliputra there stands a big old mansion. Inside the mansion, in a spacious room, Yasas is sitting on a decorated couch in disguise as a merchant-prince. Around him in the floor are sitting Basavadatta with 10 other beautiful girls, all attired in gorgeous dresses. Three young boys are serving wine to Yasas in silver cups.

Basavadatta and the girls begin to dance and sing in order to entertain the merchant. They freely move around him to exhibit their physical charm. Yasas goes on drinking almost ceaselessly, emptying pot after pot and cup after cup. While enjoying the dance, he throws pieces of gold to the girls to attract them nearer. He pretends that he is getting drunk and losing his balance of body or talk.

Yasas "Do you know it my dear damsels that I am celebrating this evening as my life's best hour ? Dance and sing more and more, and take more and more of my gold to give me happiness to my utmost satisfaction."

He laughs wildly.

Basavadatta "Darling ! Why is this night the happiest of your nights ? Have you been blessed with a son ? Have you been able to acquire immense wealth ?'

Yasas "No. I am celebrating not the birth of a son, but the death of a son. I have not acquired wealth, but am ready to throw away all that I have."

Basavadatta (*in surprise*) "What's the matter ? We fail to understand you."

Yasas "Don't speak about to anybody for Heaven's sake. I am celebrating the coming death of your King who killed my only son. He also killed my two brothers. He plundered all my wealth in my house at Kasi. On hearing his mortal illness, and coming to know of his impending death, I am celebrating this festival of joy."

Basavadatta "You Sriman Banikji ! I cannot be with you any more to hear such things from you. Give me my share of gold, and allow me to go."

Yasas (*drunk and angry*) "Those of you who do not share my joy, get our from my presence. Those of you who share my pleasure, may wait for diamonds."

He throws away a bag of gold at Basavadatta, and holds some pieces of diamonds in his palm. While Basavadatta collects the bag and goes out with 7 of her girls, 2 girls stay on while looking at the glittering diamonds with lustful eyes.

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Yasas — "Come my sweet hearts, come near. You are brave indeed. When the entire population of Pataliputra is waiting for the death of Chandasoka these stupid girls are still timid to hear my words of courage! When Prince Susima comes to throne, I shall ask him to cut down this Basavadatta to pieces."

Ist Girl — "Darling ! Are you a man of Prince Susima ? Is he coming back to become our Emperor ?"

Yasas — "You two girls, first take these two diamonds for you courage to stay with me. Susima is soon coming to the throne. When he comes, I shall take you to him. Yes, I am a devotee of Susima. I have kept a hundred diamonds with me to offer at his feet. Only if someone can tell me where the Prince is hiding, I can give to him or her 10 diamonds forthwith."

2nd Girl — "Banikji ! The Prince and his brothers were very fond of both us. They liked our songs and dances. But we also do not know about his whereabouts. We can only pray for his return so that we can once again entertain him and the other princes."

Yasas hands over the diamonds to two girls, and starts drinking again. The girls recline on his body.

Yasas — "Darling ! Sweetheart ! Do you know anybody here in Pataliputra or anywhere else in the Empire of Magadh who can tell me about the place of Prince Susima. I am his loyal servant. I can offer to him all my wealth when he is in great need."

Ist Girl — "We know only one person who knows about the place where Prince Susima with his wife and brothers lives in secrecy. He is the Cammandant of the Fort of Rajagriha. He also knows us as Susima's girl friends. But he does not take us to him in spite of our ardent prayers.

Yasas (*half asleep*) — "If you can take me to that man tomorrow night, I shall reward you with ten diamonds each. Do you agree ? I shall wait for you here till tomorrow night."

He falls asleep as a drunken man. The two girls quietly go out.

Scene 11

Dark Road — **Two Girls, A Glutton**

As the two girls come out of the gate of the Mansion of Yasas to reach their waiting cart, in stark darkness they stumble over a fat glutton lying on the road side.

Glutton — "Please lift me up, oh kind ladies. Help me to reach my house. I am dying of stomach pain for my over-eating."

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A Girl "Did you eat up to your neck at the King's palace?"

Glutton "Yes, I did. But the King is no more. Our prayers did not yield any result. He died of his vices. It is the will of the Gods."

The girls help him to get up and take him to a distance by holding his arms.

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Episode Twenty-Three

Commentary

Prince Susima receives reports in his hideout that Asoka is dead. He is led to believe that the news of the Emperor's death is kept a close secret till his younger brother Prince Vitasoka is raised to the throne. Yasas, in disguise, meets the commandant of Rajagriha who is a Susima man, and comes to know of the location of the hideout. Radhagupta, too, plays his part to lure Susima to death-trap.

Scene 1

Night : Rajagriha Fort **Commandant, Agents, 2 Girls, Yasas**

The Commandant of the Rajagriha Fort, a Susima loyalist, believes in the news of Asoka's impending death. The two dancing girls meet him to report about the coming of Yasas with his wealth. The Commandant looks like a stupid person. He receives reports from his agents.

1st Agent — "Master !I heard the same news everywhere in Pataliputra, in shops markets, temples and river ghat that the King is about to die."

2nd Agent — "I heard that he is already dead, but the news is kept a close secret."

Commandant — "What for is it kept secret ?"

3rd Agent — "The priests say that Prince Vitasoka is away from the capital and is unable to ascend the throne. The moment he comes back and sits on the throne, the death of the Chakravarti will be announced."

Commandant — "I am happy to hear this. I now ask you to go to the Corown Prince and give him this great news without delay. Tell the Prince that I have ascertained the fact from different sources, and it is true."

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The Agents bow down and go out. The two girls come in.

Commandant "How could you come here my dear ones, and so bravely ?"

1st Girl "The King is dead."

2nd Girl "Master ! We have brought with us a rich merchant of Kasi. He is a sworn enemy of Chandasoka who killed his only son and two brothers. He wants to see you."

Commandant "Bring him in !"

One girl goes out and comes back with Yasas. Yasas falls at the feet of the Commandant and offers ten diamonds on floor. He pretends acute pain in his chest, and is holding a big bag in hand.

Yasas (*lying down*) "Your Highness ! Kindly and mercifully give me a chance to meet the Crown Prince and place at his feet all my diamonds. The souls of my son and brothers will be satisfied in Heaven. I am a diamond merchant of Kasi. My world has been ruined by Chandasoka. My moments are numbered. Let me offer to the Prince my fortune and die in peace that I have avenged the death of my dear ones. With your grace, let me fulfil my vow."

Commandant "Dear Merchant ! Why not wait till you find the Prince on the throne as the Emperor. Your gifts to him will be highly rewarded in other forms?"

Yasas "Yas, I can wait. But, I am afraid of my death. It may come any moment because of the breathlessness I suffer from this acute pain in my chest. Prince Susima will soon reach the throne. Even the Prime Minister is coming to this inaccessible region in search of the Prince to take him to Pataliputra. He knows me well. But I cannot meet him either to offer my diamonds. I have no time to wait for anyone except the God of Death."

Commandant "What do you say ? Prime Minister is coming in search of the Crown Prince ?"

Yasas "Yes, he is coming to invite the Crown Prince to take the throne now that Chandasoka is dead. But he does not know where and how to trace the Prince."

Commandant "The old sinner is coming to the Prince against whom he played his mischief. Is he not afraid of death? The Prince will prefer his head to the invitation he brings I shall catch him and offer him to the Prince."

The Commandant looks to Yasas who is holding his chest tight and groaning in pain. He collects the diamonds and turns to his guards.

Commandant "Guards ! Blind-fold this merchant and take him to the hideout of the Prince. If the Prince will suspect him, he may be cut to pieces. If not, leave him to die his natural death after offering his gifts."

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Yasas (*getting up*) "Oh My Gracious Commandant ! I shall be relieved of all my pain if the future Emperor orders his executioners to remove my head on the scafford."

The guards take away Yasas. The Commandant looks at the diamonds on his palm with wide open eyes.

Scene 2

Hideout **Susima, Sumana**

Inside a decorated cave is sleeping on her bed Susima's wife Sumana. She is in an advanced stage of pregnancy. Prince Susima comes in.

Susima (*excited*) "Sumana ! You have already heard that Asoka is dying. The latest report from Rajagriha is that he is dead ! I have to leave you, dear, in this hideout and lead my army to Rajagriha. You are carrying your auspicious child who may touch the earth any day. I am leaving you behind with a heavy heart. But, be sure, you will be soon in the Palace of Pataliputra to give birth to your child."

Sumana looks happy, but worried.

Sumana "Aryaputra ! How can I live here in your absence ? Why not take me with you!"

Susima "You are not able to move out in this state of your health. Movement on horse or in chariot will cause pain to your body, nay, to our child in the womb. Prince Sugatra will be here with you to look after your health and comfort. Soon will he take you to me as the Empress of Bharat."

Sugatra comes in.

Scene 3

Same : Exterior **Susima, Sudatta, Yasas, Guards**

Yasas is brought to the presence of Susima and Sudatta blindfolded. He is writhing in agony and is looking like a dying man.

1st Guard "Your Majesty ! The Commandant of the Fort has sent this man to you."

A guard takes out a thick cover from Yasas' eyes. Yasas lies flat at the feet of Susima and opens his bag to release diamonds on the ground. He pretends inability to speak. Susima and Sudatta look at the diamonds.

2nd Guard "Your Majesty ! This man is a merchant-prince of Kasi and a diamond dealer. When he engineered a revolt in Kasi against Chandasoka, his son

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and brothers were killed and his wealth plundered. Swearing vengeance, he has come to offer his wealth at your feet before breathing his last.''

Yasas is trying to utter a few words while holding the feet of Susima.

Yasas ''My Emperor ! The tyrant is now no more. These diamonds are for the Empress. Soon I shall go to the other world to fight with the soul of the killers of many innocent men. My soul will meet Chandasoka in Hell.''

He cries aloud in dying pain.

Susima (*to guards*) ''Take him to a cave. Nurse him to give him relief from pain.''

Yasas ''My Saviour ! Have mercy on me to ask the guard to pierce his sword to my chest. Only death will relieve me from this deadly pain.''

Yasas is unable to walk. He is carried by the two guards on their shoulders.

Sudatta ''Brother ! Every moment is a precious moment. Our soldiers are ready to march.''

Susima ''We start in the darkness of the night. Sugatra will be here to look after Sumana.''

Sudatta ''Let us take Asoka's wife with us.''

Susima (laughing) ''Devi will go with Empress Sumana as her slave-girl, not now. Let the palace see the game of Destiny !''

A spy reaches the place running and sweating, almost breathless.

Spy ''Your Majesty ! Prime Minister Radhagupta who was on his way to the forests of Uruvillva has been captured by the Commandant of the Fort.''

Susima ''What for was that dog going to the forests ? To escape ? To become a Buddha ?''

Spy ''The Commandant reports that Raadhagupta was on his mission to search you out and to take you to Pataliputra to ascend the throne now that the Emperor Asoka is dead.''

Susima ''Wonderful indeed ! There can be now no doubt that the devil is dead ! And, as for this crafty Brahmin, he comes to take me to Pataliputra as if it is his paternal possession ! My first work will be to despatch him to the other world when I see him in my presence.''

Susima turns to Sudatta.

Susima ''Advance to Rajagriha and keep that fellow in a dark dungeon till I reach the Fort in the night.''

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Sudatta "I, too, would like to see him die in my hand. But, better it will be to drag him to Pataliputra for public execution. It will be a lesson to all the traitors."

Scene 4

Cave Cell: Interior **Devi, Two Women Guards**

Two women guards are with Devi after the news of Asoka's death reached the hideout. Devi is sitting like a dead woman. Guards are in tears. Yasas' wife is weeping.

1st Guard "Respected Sakya Kumari ! You are as pure as a Goddess. God will not give you this punishment. It may just be a rumour that the Emperor is dead."

2nd Guard "Prince Susima and Prince Sudatta have left for Pataliputra. All our soldiers have gone with them. Our hideout now looks like a ghastly place of ghosts."

Devi (*sad*) "Have they taken Princess Sumana with them ?"

1st Guard "No. Prince Sugatra is staying to attend upon her with a dozen guards."

Devi "Is she well ? If she needs me to nurse her, I am here at her disposal. Go, and ask her if she requires my service ! Also, pay my regards to her as the Empress of Magadh !"

Devi sits silent. Yasas' wife weeps bitterly.

Scene 5

Night:Rajagriha Fort:Interior **Radhagupta, Susima, Sudatta, Commandant**

The Commandant of the Fort takes Susima and Sudatta to an underground cell where Radhagupta is kept in chains. A burning torch is held by a guard. Radhagupta looks to the eyes of the Princes with courage of confidence.

Radhagupta "Chakravarti ! I have come to die. But I shall die a noble death for sake of my duty to the Mauryas."

Susima (*in rage*) "You wizard ! Speak out what you have to say before your tongue is removed."

Radhagupta "I have not announced the death of the late Emperor Asoka though the news have leaked out. His body is well kept in his room. It is time for Your Majesty to reach the Palace before Prince Vitasoka returns from Rishikesh to occupy the throne. Your Majesty, most Ministers and Generals will receive you outside the Capital. I shall not be there with them

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to welcome the new Emperor, but my Soul will be there to feel happy that my mortal body has perished for the sin I committed in raising a monster of cruelty to the sacred throne of Magadh.''

He bends down his head before Susima to show his neck to the open sword of the Prince. Prince Sudatta looks to his brother who is about to raise his sword.

Sudatta — ''Brother ! Let us drag him with us in chains to Pataliputra. If the other Ministers do not come to welcome you, we shall carry the head of Prime Minister on a pole and enter into the Palace.''

Susima (*to Radhagupta*) — ''I spare your life for this night. Tell me you slave of Asoka, how could you know that I am in this place ?''

Radhagupta — ''We had searched the whole Empire to find out your hideout except these forest regions bordering upon Kalinga. We gave up our hope to find your place. When the late Majesty died, and when I badly needed your presence in Pataliputra, my intution suggested that You could be only in these region from where it could be easy for you to escape to a foreign land if and when your place is detected. So, I came secretly to conduct a search myself to find my new master, and it is God's will that my mission has proved extremely rewarding.''

Susima — ''When do you expect Vitasoka to reach Pataliputra from Rishikesh ? That place is too far from the Capital !.''

Radhagupta — ''Your Majesty ! When Asoka died and I decided to take you to the throne, Queen Dharma decided to place Vitasoka on throne. She sent her messengers to Vitasoka who was already on his way back. The Prince may reach the capital even tomorrow morning !''

Susima — ''So early as tomorrow morning ?''

Radhagupta — ''Your Majesty ! Better kill me, but do not kill your time. We may reach Pataliputra by the last quarter of this night at the latest. We have to speed up on horse back.''

They come out of the cell in quick steps.

Scene 6

Prince Vitasoka is riding fast through dense forests towards the hideout of Susima, followed by a large cavalry force.

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Scene 7

Hideout:Cave **Yasas, Two Guards**

In front of a dark cave, Yasas is lying half--dead and gasping for his last breath. Two Guards are sitting near him helplessly.

Yasas "Water, water, a little water ! I am dying."

A Guard comes near to him to see his face.

Yasas "I am glad that all have left the place to kill Chandasoka if he is yet alive ! I shall now die in peace."

He takes out two gold pieces from his waist with much difficulty and gives them to the Guards. The Guards feel surprised and happy.

Yasas "Friends ! My last moments have come. I am a Buddhist ! Is there no Buddhist here to utter the names of the Lord while I die ?"

Ist Guard "There are two Buddhist women in a cave nearby as prisoners. One is the wife of your enemy Asoka. Her name is Devi. She is a noble lady. She can come to utter prayers. She attends upon the sick and the wounded. Even, she nurses Princess Sumana when she is sick. Should we call her ?"

Yasas "Don't call her to my death place. Tell me the cave where she lives ! I shall crawl to the cave while dying in order to kill her."

2nd Guard "You can never go that far, even if her cave is just behind this cave. Better, die here in peace while thinking of your Buddha."

Yasas (*crying for breath*) "I shall die now, only to turn a ghost and shall fall upon that witch of a woman as a ghost to touch her to death."

Yasas Suddenly dies with a piercing cry of pain. A guard looks at his face and eyes through darkness. He springs up in fear.

Ist Guard "He is dead ! His tongue and eyes have come out."

2nd Guard "He said, he will be a ghost ! Oh dear, a ghost. Let us run away."

The Guards run away in darkness.

Scene 8

Devi's Cave **Yasas, Devi, Yasas' Wife**

Yasas silently enters into the dark cave of Devi at the entrance to which are sleeping two women guards. He finds Devi and his wife sitting like stone images before a dim lamp. He goes near to Devi.

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Yasas "Devi, I am Yasas. I have come to take you. The Emperor is alive. Come with me as the guards are asleep."

Devi (*amazed*) "Am I in dream ! Is my husband really alive ? Yasas ! Am I to go with you to my dear Prince ?"

Yasas (*in whisper*) "Come out quickly. There is no time to talk."

Devi (*standing up*) "Is Sumana well ? Is she safe ?"

Yasas "It is for her husband to look after her. She must be well."

Yasas, Devi and Yasas' wife go out in silent steps from inside the cave as the Guards outside are asleep.

They hear outside the sounds of Cavalry forces falling upon the hideout. They disappear to the opposite side of the hill.

Scene 9

Sumana's Cave **Princes Sumana, Sugatra**

It is dead of night. Sugatra enters into the cave of Sumana to find her in deep sleep. He looks desperate. He wakes up Sumana.

Sugatra "Bhabi ! We are ruined. Asoka's soldiers under Vitasoka have invaded out hideout. They have started killing out men. They will soon reach us. Come out with me at once."

Sugatra helps Sumana to run out of the cave.

Scene 10

Night:Outside City Wall **Susima, Sudatta, Radhagupta, Ministers, Generals**

Prince susima with Radhagupta and Sudatta and his soldiers reaches the outskirts of Patali-putra. The City is surrounded by a high wall. A deep moat, full of water, separates the City Wall from the outskirts. Susima and party reach the western side of the wall in dense darkness. At the opposite side of the moat, some Ministers and Generals receive the Prince by kneeling down at his feet.

A Senior Minister "Your Majesty ! Our Emperor and Saviour ! On behalf of all your Ministers I beg your mercy and forgiveness for our support to Chan-dasoka against our legitimate Monarch. We are ready for punishment from your hand after you ascend the throne."

Commander-in--Chief "Your Majesty ! On behalf of all the Generals, I as their Senapati, beg forgiveness from Your August Majesty. I have ordered the army to

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remain confined to barracks and not to come out at the order of Queen Dharma who is waiting for her son Vitasoka."

Susima — "I shall forgive you as your Emperor if only all of you serve me with your total devotion and loyality to me."

Radhagupta — "Your Majesty ! On the other side of the moat are standing near the Gate the Chief Priests of Pataliputra to perform the Arati as you cross over this ford over the Moat."

Susima looks to the other side of the Ford and finds through darkness a number of Priests with lamps in their hands standing at the Gate of receive him. He finds a number of young girls standing on either side of the Gate with garlands and conches in their hands. He now looks at Radhagupta, whose hands are still tied in iron chains, for instruction.

Radhagupta (*pointing his finger to the Ford*) — "Your Majesty ! I shall take you over the Ford to the other side of the deep Moat. Other Ministers and Generals will follow us in rows of two only as the Ford is very narrow. Behind the Ministers and Generals will walk Prince Sudatta with his forces. As we reach the Gate, the doors will be opened for us to advance towards the Palace. Your Majesty may now advance and walk on the floral decoration through the central line of the Ford. I walk with you to your left with the greatest pleasure and pride of my life. Let your Majesty advance."

Radhagupta advances towards the Ford. He puts his step on the plain wooden planks leaving the floral line for the Prince to walk. They start walking side by side. As they reach the centre of the Ford, and Prince Susima puts his next step forward, in lightening suddenness he sinks down to depth, and drowns in a boiling Couldron of Oil. With a piercing cry rising to the sky, Susima goes down to depth. Fire and smoke sprout out from the hole through which Susima fell to his death. Flames of fire and thick clouds of smoke rise higher and higher. The voice of a General from the rampart of the wall is heard resounding.

General — "Soldiers ! Come out from your hiding and destroy the enemy." A large number of soldiers emerge out and attack Sudatta's forces. A grim battle continues on the other side of the Ford. Prince Sudatta fights and falls dead.

Scene 11

Dawn:Palace Courtyard — **Asoka, Yasas, Devi**

It is dawn following that night when a chariot enters into the courtyard of the Palace. It halts in front of Asoka's apartment. From the covered chariot comes out Yasas. He runs straight towards Asoka's room and pulls a string. Asoka comes out of his apartment. He finds Yasas in his presence, expressing great delight.

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Yasas "Aryaputra ! At this moment of your triumph over the enemy, this humble servant has brought for you a gift more precious than the Crown which you are going to wear."

Asoka *(excited)* "Have you saved my beloved Devi ? Have you brought her with you ?"

Yasas points his finger to the covered chariot. Asoka runs towards it. Devi comes out. She lifts her thick veil and looks at her husband's eyes.

Asoka (*in deep emotion*) "So at last, I have got you Devi."

Devi bows down and takes dust from Asoka's feet.

Devi (*sad*) "Aryaputra ! Can I come to your palace without my children with me ? I cannot rest for a moment without seeing them."

She sobs and wipes out tears from her eyes.

Yasas "Your Majesty ! Give your permission to this servant to take her to Kapilavastu."

Asoka looks at Yasas and Devi indicating consent.

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Episode Twenty Four

Commentary

While Prince Susima is lured to his doom, Princess Sumana escapes from the hideout with Sugatra. Followed by Asoka's soldiers, she finally disappears into a dense forest where she gives birth to a son. Prince Sugatra reaches the Kalinga country of find political shelter. Asoka gets back Devi and his children in a happy union.

Scene 1

Forest Road **Sugatra, Sumana, 5 Soldiers**

Prince Sugatra, carrying Princess Sumana on his horse, is riding very fast to escape from enemy hands. Five loyal soldiers are riding with them. They are heading towards the south through a forest road. After they cross the forest, they get up to a highway, running in the direction of the Kalinga country.

Scene 2

Highway **Same, Asoka's Soldiers**

Sun is above the eastern horizon when Sugatra and his followers are riding on the highway. Sugatra turns backward and finds the enemy cavaliers at a far distance riding swiftly to overcome them. On the either side of the highway, there stand hills of high altitude. Sugatra looks to his soldiers riding by his side.

Sugatra "My brave loyal friends ! Get down from your horses and take up your position here. Offer resistance to hold up the enemy as long as possible. Let me escape with Princess Sumana to a safer distance. Let us all die to save the life of the Empress. Who knows, by now the Crown Prince

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might be on the throne of Magadh. His soldiers might be coming to rescue us.''

A Soldier — ''We shall fight with the enemy till the last drop of our blood. We pray that you take the Princess as fast as possible. The Kalinga frontier is not far away. If you reach the frontier while we hold up the enemy forces here, there shall be no fear to your person.''

The soldiers get down from their horses and take their position with swords and shields in hands. Sugatra rides away in high speed.

Scene 3

Highway — **Sugatra, Sumana**

The highway is running at the bottom of a lofty peak where there is a sharp bending of the road. On one side there is the high rock and on the other side a deep ravine. Up and down the hill there dense forests, dark and fearsome. Sugatra is on his horse with Sumana. Suddenly, Sumana cries with heavy pains in her abdomen.

Sumana — ''Sugatra ! Stop here. I cannot ride any further. I am in extreme pain which I have so far suppressed. But I cannot endure it anymore. Oh Go ! it may be the pain of delivery ! Drop me here to suffer my fate, and ride fast to avoid the enemy's detection of my person.''

Sugatra gets down from horse. He looks backward as far as eyes can see and spots the enemy soldiers at a far distance, but coming swiftly.

Sugatra — ''Bhabiji ! I do not fear for my life ! I fear for your life and more than that for the life of the child in you. God will come to your rescue. Go down this hill slope slowly. Dense forests will hide your movement. I see a few huts inside the forests at a distance. Somehow please struggle to reach that place. These forest--dwellers are the noblest among men. They will look after you. May God bless you with a son ! Please go down quickly. The enemy will find us soon. Let me ride as fast as I can. If I live, I shall soon come back.''

Sumana (holding *her abdomen*) — ''Oh God ! Give me the strength to deliver my child. (*Looking to Sugatra*) My dear, may God save your life ! Do ride away very fast.''

She goes down the hill slope and disappears from sight in the thickness of big trees. Sugatra gets up to his horse and rides as swiftly as he can.

Scene 4

End of Highway : Check Gate — **Kalinga Captain, His Soldiers, Sugatra, Asoka's Soldiers**

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The highway ends at the frontier between Magadh and Kalinga. A hill fort stands on the Kalinga side where there is Check Gate, guarded by a Kalingan Captain and his soldiers.

Sugatra reaches the place in speed and gets down. He throws away his sword and stands before the Kalingans with folded hands.

Sugatra — "Commandant ! I am Prince Sugatra, son of the late Emperor of Magadh, Bindusara Amitraghata, and the younger brother of the Crown Prince Susima. I surrender myself to you and pray for protection. The soldiers of my enemy, Chandasoka, are coming to kill me."

Kalinga Captain — "Your surrender to us means you are in our protection. It is our duty to save your life."

He blows a trumpet. A number of Kalinga soldiers come out of the fort. Soon arrive Asoka's cavaliers and get down. They face the Kalingans with their arms.

Asoka's Captain — "Dear Kalingan Friends ! We are Emperor Asoka's soldiers. This Prince is an enemy of the Emperor. We have the order to capture him dead or alive."

Kalinga Captain — "He is not dead, but is very much alive. Your Emperor's order does not hold ground once his enemy is on the soil of another country. The Prince has taken shelter with us and we have offered him protection."

Asoka's Captain — "As he is a man of Magadh, we have our claims on his person wherever he may be. It will be wiser on your part to hand him over to us."

Kalinga Captain — "We have done the wisest work by granting personal safety to a Prince in distress. Do not forget, he is the son of an Emperor and also the brother of your present Emperor. We have given him the honour he deserves. Everybody knows that his own brother, the Crown Prince Susima, is the legitimate Emperor, whereas, the present monarch is a usurper. People of your country call him a Chandasoka. Can we hand over a Prince who is fighting for a just cause to the mercy of a Monster of Cruelty ? It will be a wiser course for you to turn back at once."

Asoka's Captain — "Is if proper on your part to talk of our Emperor in filthy terms ?"

Kalinga Captain — "We have not coined the terms which are offensive. It is your people who have done so, and we only use those terms. When the subjects of Magadh call their King as Chandasoka, why not all other people everywhere call him in that name ?"

Asoka's Captain — "Your words prove your hostility towards our Chakaravarti King. Are you aware of the consequences ?"

Kalinga Captain — "Is the Kalinga Country afraid of your monster--monarch to think of consequences ? I ask you to turn back forthwith, or else, your bodies will

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soon enrich the soil of Kalinga.''

Kalinga soldiers aim their arrows at the Magadhans. Asoka's soldiers at once take to their horses and speed away.

Scene 5

Forest **Princess Sumana, A Tribal Leader, Two Tribal Women**

Inside a dense forest, under a big Nigrodha Tree, Sumana is lying helplessly and suffering from the pangs of delivery. Two tribal women are attending upon her with kindness and care. A tribal leader is sitting at a distance in kneeling posture and offering his prayers with eyes closed.

Tribal Leader ''Oh Tathagata Buddha ! Oh our Saviour ! Oh the Master of Karmic Sufferings of men ! Have mercy on this unfortunate woman ! Save her life and her child at its birth *''

The birth-cry of the child is soon heard.

A Tribal Woman ''Master ! It is a beautiful little son !''

Tribal Leader ''A son ! Buddha has heard my prayer. What a lucky son ! See, he is born under this sacred Nigrodha Tree ! This is a most auspicious sign.''

The two women help Sumana to get up and walk in slow steps towards their hut with the child in hand.

Scene 6

Hut : Interior **Sumana, Baby Son, Tribal Women, Tribal Chief, Buddhist Monk**

Princess Sumana is lying on the floor on a mat inside the hut of the Tribal Chief. Two tribal women are sitting near her feet. Sumana is feeding milk to the 7-day old baby from her breast, half reclining on bed. The Tribal Chief enters.

Tribal Chief ''Maa ! Today is the seventh day of the child's life. I have invited the head of our monastery to come and give a name to the baby. We are Buddhists. In this forest there are no priests or Brahmins to perform the Child's birth rituals. But, the Bhikshu of our Sangha will do the work and bless the child.''

Summana ''My son ! You have saved my life from certain death. You have saved the life of my son. You are both like my father and my son. Whatever you think best, you are free to do.''

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Chief "Maa ! As you are not willing to say anything about your parents or of your house or of your husband, I shall not ask you also about your caste or religion. I have told the Bhikshu what I think of you. You surely come from a noble family of the highest order. It is your destiny that has driven you to this suffering. You have to forget your past by looking to the face of your precious son which is like a gift from the Buddha. Buddha will show you the path for future."

Some tribal girls come with flowers and leaves and sit down around the mat to utter the Buddhist hymns. A Buddhist Monk enters. He looks at the face of Sumana and the child and lifts his hands upward to heavens.

Monk "Oh Tathagata, Oh Sakyamuni, Oh Buddha ! Bless the child and its mother to enjoy mercy. Take them to Thy Fold for a life of purity, and towards the path of salvation."

The Monk takes his seat on a separate mat and sits cross-legged. The girls chant the hymn: "Buddham Saranam Gachchami, Dharmam Sarananam Gachchami, Sangham Saranam Gachchami." When they finish the hymn, the Monk looks to the Chief.

Monk "Look my friend ! Being violent forest-dwellers living with wild beasts, you people are noble and virtuous enough to lead a life of peace ! But see, what our rulers are doing as the civilised leaders of a great country, this sacred land of Gautama Siddhartha, the Eternal Master of Peace and Non-violence !"

Chief "Revered Bhikshu ! What has happened by now to King Chandasoka ? Is he still alive or dead ?"

Monk "Chandasoka will know no death. Even the God of Death will fear to come to him ! He is very much alive. He only pretended illness and fed thousands of greedy men day after day in order to spread the news of his illness with the intention of luring his elder brother, Prince Susima from forests to the capital. And, when this unfortunate man went to capture the throne, he was led to a death-trap by that most viceful Radhagupta to fall into a boiling couldron of oil and die. This is what a King and a Prime Minister could do in this land of Bharat -- most abominable, a most despicable, a most violent and a most unkind act ! Who knows what curse will fall on this King for his sinful Karma !"

Sumana hears the words of the Monk in stunned silence. Her eyes turn dull and face pale. She looks to the face of her son. She expresses no emotion, sheds no tear.

Chief "Noble Bhikshu ! This lotus-like baby was born under a sacred Nigrodha Tree seven days ago to this gracious lady. Your Holiness may kindly give the child a name and bless him for a nobler life."

Sumana puts the little baby on the lap of the Monk and bows at his feet. Tears suddenly drop down from her eyes.

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Monk "My daughter ! Why do you weep ! Life is full of sorrows, said the Master. Desire is the cause of sorrows, said He. Destruction of all wordly desires leads to the destruction of all sorrows. My dear ! Rise above the sorrows and sorrowful thoughts and think of the Nirvana, the supreme goal of existence. Everyone is born to suffer the evil effects of his or her previous Karma. It is by noble deeds alone that one can cross the miseries of Karma to attain the perfect bliss of existence."

Sumana hears the sermons with rapt attention.

Sumana "My Holy Father ! Will you kindly admit me to your Order to follow the noble path which the Enlightened One laid for the mankind: I have no more of earthly desires, no more of mundane hopes ! I have reached the dead end of my sorrows and have crossed the last limit of my Karmic sufferings ! Father, give me the peace of existence, give me the lessons of truth."

She puts her hands on the feet of the Bhikshu and bursts into weeping.

Monk "My daughter ! It is only at this stage of your existence that you can enter into a new realm of bliss, into a true state of inner happiness. Do recite with me":

Buddham Saranam Gachchhami.

Sumana recites the line. Her tears vanish from her eyes. The monk hands ever the child to its mother.

Sumana "Holy Father ! From this moment of its life, this child of mine, Nigrodha, is a Buddhist. He will grow up as a Buddhist and live for the Sangha."

Monk "I bless you my daughter ! Who knows, what future awaits this boy when he grows up as a Buddhist. You have called him Nigrodha. I too give that name to him. Born under the shade of the Nigrodha Tree, he will give the shade of peace to others when he grows up into manhood. Let the Master's blessings shower on the child."

The Monk gets up. Sumana places the child at his feet.

Monk "You are admitted to the Buddhist Sangha as you offer your son to the Sangha. I shall take you to the monastery near Buddha-Gaya to live there with other nuns and to rear up your child in the Buddhist way. As you know, it was at Buddha-Gaya under the Bodhi Tree that the Tathagata became the Englightened One. No place on earth is more sacred than that place. Blessed are you and your child to begin your blissful life there."

Scene 7

Kapilavastu Monastery **Yasas, Devi, Upagupta Mahindra Age 13) Sanghamitra (11)**

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Devi reaches the monastery at Kapilavastu in a big chariot drawn by four horses, and followed by a large number of cavalrymen. She gets down at the gate of the monastery. Yasas and soldiers get down from horse.

From inside the monastery comes out Sannyasi Upagupta, followed by monks and nuns. Mahindra and Sanghamitra run to their mother. Devi first bows down at the feet of Upagupta and next embraces her children in deep emotion.

Yasas (*smiling*) "My dear ones ! I have kept my promise. I have brought your mother to you. More than three years have passed since I deposited you in this monastery. Now, you can get ready to go to your father who is waiting for you."

Upagupta and nuns take Devi inside as joyous Mahindra and Sanghamitra run to Yasas to embrace him.

Scene 8

Lumbini Garden **Devi, Mahindra, Sanghamitra**

Inside the vast but deserted and desolated garden Lumbini outside Kapilavastu, Devi is walking with Mahindra and Sanghamitra when the sun is sinking on the western sky.

Devi "This is the place where under these Sala Trees was born Prince Gautama Siddhartha when his mother Maya Devi was on her way to her father's house. She wanted to halt here for some time. The Sala Tress showered flowers on her baby as the Holy Child descended to earth. Clouds in Heaven showered rains to bathe the mother and the child. Divine music flowed from nowhere. The earth and the Heaven rejoiced at the birth of the Buddha."

Mahindra "Mother ! I have fallen in love with this place. Will my father allow me to return to Kapilavastu ?"

Sanghamitra "Maa ! Why don't you stay here in this beautiful paradise of peace and pray to Buddha as you do in your house ? Is it not a better place than the place where our father lives with his generals and soldiers ? Why don't you request father to come here?"

Devi kisses her daughter.

Devi "When you grow up, you may justify your name by staying here in the Sangha. At moment, your father is anxiously waiting for you in Pataliputra. Let us first go to him and I have come here to take you with me."

As the sunset comes, they sit down under the Sala Trees and offer prayer by singing the hymn "Buddham Saranam Gachchhami."

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Episode Twenty-Five

Commentary

With he end of the Fratricidal War and after his union with Devi and the children, Asoka prepares for his Coronation Ceremony. Nearly four years had passed since he ascended the throne, but his Coronation did not take place because of the internal strife. Pataliputra prepares for a Coronation the like of which India had not seen before.

Scene 1

The 'Hell' — **Girika, Commandant of Rajagriha, Other Victims**

All the suspected friends of Susima including the Commandant of the Rajagriha Fort and his girl-friends are in chains inside Girika's Hell. The fearful and trembling victims are awaiting torture death. Girika observes their faces and laughs aloud in his fiendish pleasure.

Girika — "You traitors and plotters ! You did enough against the Chakravarti and enough in favour of the dead devil Susima. Now that your patron is dead, you too should go to him to serve him there in the real Hell. Your passage to that real Hell should be through Girika's Hell."

He looks at his guards and attendants.

Girika — "Take this Commandant of Rajagriha to the torture chamber to roast him alive along with these girls. When their bodies are roasted tear them to pieces and feed the crows."

Commandant — "Give us mercy Girika, give us mercy ! The strife between the Princes is over. We are all loyal to His Majesty now and will remain so for ever. Once the enemy is dead, there is no need for this Hell. We cry for the

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Emperor's mercy from here and we pray to him to put an end to this Hell.''

Girika ''You fool ! Enmies may die, but the Hell remains. Even if all the sinners on earth turn into saints, yet the God of Death Yama will maintain His Hell. So will this Hell stay on earth.''

A Girl ''You Chanda - Girika ! For how long, for how long ?''

Girika (*in fury*) ''As long as the words Chandasoka and Chanda-Girika survive on human lips so long the Hell will exist to pluck out your tongues.''

He orders the executioners.

Girika ''Drag these girls to your chambers. Cut out their tongues first, and next grind their bones to dust.''

The victims are dragged by monster-looking executioners to the torture chambers.

Scene 2

Court Hall **Asoka, Radhagupta, Courtiers, A General**

Asoka is holding his first Court after the death of Susima. The Hall is packed to capacity brim. The Emperor is sitting on the throne in full majesty. Radhagupta stands up to address the Courtiers.

Radhagupta ''Ministers and courtiers ! By God's Grace and His Majesty's Will, the enemy has met his disastrous doom. I announce it to the court that the fratricidal war is over, dangers to the Maurya throne have disppeared, and the stability of the Magadhan Empire is assured.''

The Courtiers acclaim the Prime Minister's announcement with wild expression of joy.

Courtiers (*in unison*) ''Jayatu, Jayatu, Jayatu, Jayatu, Chakravarti Samrat Asoka.''

Radhagupta ''On behalf of the court, I appeal to our gracious majesty for his permission to hold the coronation ceremony the like of which this Land of Bharat never saw before.''

Courtiers Cheer.

Radhagupta ''The coronation was delayed not for the threats from the enemy Princes, but for the absence of Her Majesty the Empress, Vidisha Mahadevi Sakya Kumari, from the palace. Now that she is with her noble husband, the coronation will go by its religious sanctity. Further more, the glorious dynasty of the great Mauryas is dignified by the presence of Prince Mahindra as the Heir-Apparent of our Imperial Majesty.''

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Courtiers cheer

Couriters (*in unison*) "Jayatu Vidisha Mahadevi Sakya Kumari, Jayatu Kumar Mahindra."

A General stands up.

General "Your Majesty ! I have to report that Prince Sugatra could manage to escape from his hideout. Our brave soldiers chased him to the farthest end of the empire. But, moments before he was caught, he crossed over to the Kalinga frontier, and the Kalinga guards offered him ready shelter. Our soldiers protested, but the Kalingans behaved most obstinately and refused to hand over the enemy to our hands. Your Majesty Princess Sumana could not be traced out. She fled to deep forests alone, and perhaps has fallen a prey to wild animals."

Asoka stands up in anger.

Asoka "Do the Kalingans think that by giving protection to a Prince of the Mauryan House, they will be able to harm the Empire of Magadh ? If they think so, they have to repent some day ! That country is like a thorn to the body of the Magadhan Empire. I have the might to pluck out the thorn."

Radhagupta "Your Majesty ! When our royal messengers will proceed to the courts of all the kings outside the Empire to invite them to attend the coronation, they will also go to Kalinga. And, when the Kalingans come to Pataliputra, I shall plead with them to surrender Sugatra as a gesture of goodwill towards our Sovereign."

Scene 3

Night : Palace Courtyard **Asoka, Devi, Mahindra, Sanghamitra, Courtiers**

In the open space of the Palace Courtyard, Basavadatta with her group of dancers presents a superb dance performance to entertain the Emperor and the Empress, and the courtiers. While the assembled guests and people enjoy the performance with great pleasure, Mahindra and Sanghamitra do not show any interest in it. Asoka feels unhappy to see the attitude of indifference in the Heir Apparent towards a royal show.

Scene 4

Night:Temple:Interior **Tishya Rakshita, Chief Priest, Priests**

Inside the main Siva Temple of Pataliputra, in the night, Tishya Rakshita is offering puja before the image of Siva. The Chief Priest is helping her in her worship. After the puja, both stand and talk in a serious manner.

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Tishya — "Revered Chief Priest ! You are the custodian of our religious faith. You are the defender of the Dharma. Without faith in the gods and goddesses, no virtue can be attained. When this faith dies out, what will heppen to your gods and goddesses, to these temples and the priests ?"

Chief Priest — "Why do you think that our great faith will die out ?"

Tishya — "Please wait and see what is going to happen to our faith. You have now an Empress who never visits temples to worshop Gods or venerate the priests ! She is a Buddhist. You will soon see the Crown Prince erecting Sanghas in Pataliputra for prayers to Buddha, not to your or my gods and goddesses. If the Queen and the Heir Apparent have no faith in our religion, they will also have no need of you as the Chief Priest and of all other priests. The Emperor will go by the advice of his consort. Soon will the palace of the Mauryas see an end of all the pujas, rites and rituals, of all the religious ceremonies and priestly practices. So, my venerable sire, your eminence as the Chief Purohit and the Prominence of your priestly class will soon come to a pathetic end !"

She offers some gold coins at the pedestal and goes out. The Chief Priest comes out.

But, finding some other priests coming in, he returns to thee interior of the temple. They sit down.

1st Priest — "Purohitji ! We have carried to you the happiest news of the season. The Emperor has decided to celebrate his coronation as never seen by Magadh before. It means, there will be endless charity to people and endless festivals and feasts for weeks or months. The Emperor will do everything to please the gods and goddesses after his great victory, and there will be no end to worship and prayers. We have to be ready for all these events."

2nd Priest — "You as the Chief Purohit and we as your subordinate priests have to perform the coronation and anoint the bodies of the Emperor and the Empress while they sit on the throne. There can be no better moment than this in our whole life ! We can rejoice at the prospect of receiving jewels and gold on the occasion to the envy of other Brahmins."

Chief Priest — "I too rejoice with you. But will the Gods be happy with us for taking part in this coronation ?"

3rd Priest (*surprised*) — "Why not ? We have to perform the God's work. The King is like a representative of the God to rule men and protect them from dangers and lawlessness. We have to sanctify his person with the sacred *mantras*. Why should the Gods have their displeasure ?"

Chief Priest — "Can we sanctify a person in name of our Gods if the person concerned does not believe in our Gods and in our mantras ?"

The Priests look at each other in surprise.

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Chief Priest — "You are aware that the Queen has not yet come to this great temple to offer worship ! She will never come. She does not believe in our Gods. She is a Buddhist by birth and by faith. How can we sanctify a Buddhist woman in the name of our Gods ? Are you prepared to receive the curses of the Gods and the anger of Heaven ? At least, I am not willing to invite my doom. I cannot go against my conscience as the Purohit to displease my Gods in order to please a Queen."

The Chief Priest looks sad and kneels down before the pedestal as others look at him in fearful dismay.

Scene 5

Palace Garden — **Asoka, Devi**

Inside the beautiful garden of the Maurya Palace are walking Asoka, Devi in their happy mood. They enjoy the beauty of the flowers and fountains under the evening sky.

Asoka — "Dear Devi ! Let me greet you as the Empress of Bharat on the eve of the coronation. How majestic would you look with a glittering crown on your head when you would occupy your throne near to my throne ! I can visualise your glamorous beauty of the coming days as the Queen of my heart."

Devi looks embarrassed but smiles with loving eyes, turned towards her husband's face.

But next mement she looks sand and morose.

Devi — "Aryaputra ! In this happy moment of my life, my mind goes to someone else !"

Asoka — "Someone else ?"

Devi — "Yes, Aryaputra my mind takes me to the unfortunate Sumana who wanted to be the Queen. Her character is just opposite to that of her husband. She is too noble and too simple. It was for her presence in the hideout that I could remain safe and consoled. Would you not try to trace her out ? She was carrying a child."

Asoka — "I am told that she escaped to a forest and perhaps. . ."

Devi — "No, no, dear ! Please don't tell me what you have heard about her. She must be living for the sake of her child. I know, how much did she pray to the gods for a child after having been a barren woman for so many years. Tathagata Buddha must have saved her life."

Asoka — "Devi ! I must try my best to find her out. That devil of a man, Sugatra, has fled to Kalinga. If Bhabi Sumana has also gone to that country, my

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emissaries will request the Kalingan rulers to hand her over to us. Those bloody people of a bloody country will never hand over Sugatra, but I hope, they may be good enough to give us back with honour a lady of the Mauryan Family.''

Devi looks at her husband with admbiring eyes as they walk forward.

Scene 6

Kalinga Court — **Kalinga Leaders, Courtiers, Asoka's Emissaries, Sudatta**

Twenty-One Kalinga Ruling Chiefs are sitting on thrones. The court hall is full with nobles, courtiers and generals. Among the nobles is sitting Prince Sudatta as a guest of the Kalinga State. A herald announces at the entrance to the court.

Herald — ''The royal emissaries from Magadh may proceed to present themselves before the gracious rulers of the Kalinga Rashtra.''

Five Magadhan emissaries enter the Court, reach the steps to the platform, bow their heads, and are guided by the escorts to take their seats facing the Rulers on the platform. They look towards Prince Sudatta who is seated on the first row.

Herald — ''The Magadhan emissaries may now present their prayer before our august Rulers.''

1st Emissary — ''Respected *Rashtrapatis* of Kalinga Rashtra ! We hve come here s the emissaries of the Mauryan Imperial Government to the court of the Kalinga Rashtra with the letter of invitation to your August Majesties to attend the coronation ceremony of Chakravarti Samrat Asoka.''

He carries a gold plate to the platform containing a silken rolll and places it before the leaders, and comes down the steps to his seat. One of the leaders opens the roll and reads its contents and passes it to others.

1st Kalinga Chief — ''Noble Emissaries ! We decline to accept your invitation on the ground that your King committed a cold-blooded murder of his elder brother by a vicious plot which is repulsive to man's conscience. Treachery has also a limit. The act of your King is an example of the lowest type of vices to which a man can stoop. It is a gross violation of all rules of decency and human dignity.''

1st Emissary — ''Our Chakravarti expected courtesy from the noble Chiefs of Kalinga, not the words of hatred as we have just heard !''

2nd Chief — ''You call your King a Chakravarti ! But we dismiss this pretentious claim of your King. A Chakravarti is he who rules from the Himalayas

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to the seas. This is what your Guru of yore, Chanakya, prescribed. But your King does not rule from the Himalayas to the seas ! Has he ever seen the sea spreading from the mouth of the Ganga to the far tip of Kanya Kumari in the south ? No, he has not. Yet he pretends himself as a Chakravarti ! You say he expected courtesy from us. But courtesy cannot be expected, it can only be deserved. Moreover, courtesy is paid to a person who is noble enough to receive it. Your King is not that kind of a man to deserve courtesy from the rulers of a great country like Kalinga."

2nd Magadhan — "While we are sorry to hear uncharitable words in respect of our Emperor, we are more sorry to see in the Kalinga Court an enemy of our Monarch in the person of Prince Sugatra."

3rd Kalinga Chief — "Dear Emissary ! Do not overstep your jurisdiction. After your invitation is declined, you are required to go back as honourably as you came. But, it seems, you have taken courage to utter the name of a Prince who has been admitted to the rank of our nobles !"

Sugatra gets up and looks to the Kalinga Chiefs.

Sugatra — "Noble Rulers ! Since my name has been uttered by these slaves of a tyrant, I seek your permission to speak a few words to them about their King."

1st Kalinga Chief — "Dear Prince !It is needless on your part to waste your words on a King whose conduct is known to the whole world."

Sugatra sits down.

1st Magadhan — "We go back with a feeling that your country is hostile to our Emperor !"

1st Kalinga Chief — "If you raise this issue, we may inform you that Kalinga country is hostile towards every King of Magadh from the time when that robber-King Mahapadma Nanda took away from this land our Sacred Jinasana, the Image of the Holy Tirthankara who was born on this sacred soil. Till Kalinga recovers the Kalinga-Jina, the people of this country will continue to hate all the King of Magadh. You may inform this to your new Sovereign."

2nd Magadhan — "Noble Rulers ! We shall convey this message to our Emperor, Before we leave the Court, may we present a request from the Maurya palace to the August Rulers of Kalinga ? Our Emperor as well as the members of the Mauryan House will feel deeply pleased if Your Gracious Government hands over Princes Sumana, the wife of the late Prince Susima, to our hands to take her back to Magadh with honour. She will be received by the Emperor with utmost respect."

1st Klinga Chief — "Inform your palace that on hearing of her plight form Prince Sugatra, our toops searched for her all over the frontier forests including the

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mountain ranges of the Meghasan. Had we seen her, we ourselves would have sent her to the Maurya palace in a golden chariot. The Kalingans knowhow to honour women, no matter from which country !''

The Kalinga Chiefs get up and the court disperse.

Scene 7

Radhagupta's House **Radhagupta, Ministers, Priests**

Inside Radhagupta's room, some senior Ministers and some senior priests gather for discussion about the coronation.

An Old Minister ''Mahamantri ! Please think if the future of the empire will be safe in hands of a Buddhist empress and a Buddhist Heir-Apparent ! Will the Brahmanical Order accept them in good spirit ?''

Chief Priest ''As I guess, the priests of Pataliputra will boycott the coronation. As a Brahmin yourself, you have to save us from persecution. if you fail, the priests may bravely face any punishment for the sake of their religion. The Emperor should know that an Empire cannot pass to a prince who does not belong to the religion of the people. If the priests and Brahmins do not defend the religion of the land, who else can do it ! It is for you to face the situation as you deem fit.''

Radhagupta ''Supposing that I request the Emperor not to make Vidisha Devi his Queen-Consort at the Comation, will it please the priests ? Can you conduct the ceremony without a Queen on the throne near her husband ?''

Chief Priest ''No. When the King has a wife, her presence is religiously necessary at the Coronation for the purpose of necessary rituals.''

Radhagupta ''I do not find a way out ! How can anyone deny Vidisha Devi her legitimate rights as a Queen to attend the coronation ? Who knows what will be the reaction of the Emperor to this situation !''

They discuss the issue in whispers and disperse with puzzled faces.

Scene 8

Asoka's Apartment **Asoka, Radhagupta, Yasas**

Asoka and Radhagupta are on chairs, facing each other. Yasas is sitting near.

Asoka ''Have our emissaries returned from the outside countries ?''

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Radhagupta — "All kings have accepted our invitation with great delight. The Greek Kings of Syria and the West, the Kings of the southern lands of Chodas, Pandyas, Satyaputra and Keralaputra, and the King of Simhala have agreed either to come in person or to send their royal ambassadors to attend the ceremony. But, unfortunately, it is the rulers of Kalinga who declined to accept our invitation, insulted our emissaries, and also raised some time-worn issues to say that they will remain hostile towards Magadh till those issues were settled. Further more, they exhibited in their open court the presence of Prince Sugatra as their noble guest."

Asoka (*excited*) — "These Kalingans, even if they have no King, have such audacity to offend my men ! They must pay for their arrogance and insolence. Do they not realise the might of my Empire ?"

Radhagupta — "Let us forget of Kalinga for the time being. There is nothing to worry if an enemy country does not behave correctly. My worry is now from a petty internal issue which may affect the splendour of the coronation. Petty yes, but who knows what orthodoxy may make of it!"

Asoka (*surprised*) — "Can there be any internal problem to affect my coronation ?"

Radhagupta — "It is delicate to bring it to the notice of the Emperor. But failing to solve it myself, I feel worried and anxious."

Asoka — "Is it anything personel ?"

Radhagupta — "Yes, it is. The priests of Pataliputra are unwilling to perform the sacred rituals of the coronation to sanctify the person of the Queen-Consort who does not belong to the established Vedic Brahmanical religion."

Asoka flares up.

Asoka — "Do these Blind Pandits dare say so? Banish them from the Capital, or even from the Empire, and bring in the best of the learned priests form Kanyakubja or Kasi."

Yasas — "Perhaps these priests do not know of the existence of Girika's Hell ! If anyone will raise a word against the Empress calling her Buddhist, he may have to go to torture chambers to understand who the Buddha is or how noble is the pious Sakya Kumari."

Radhagupta — "Orthodoxy knows no threat or fear. If the priests of Pataliputra do not come forward to santify the person of a Buddhist Queen on the throne, no priest will come to do it from any corner of Bharat. Priests as a community stand as one when it comes to a religious issue which they want to champion as a cause to fight for."

Asoka stands up in excitement and anger.

Asoka — "Mahamantri !Let me tell you -- either the coronation takes place with the Sakya Kumari as my Consort, or, it does not take place at all ! Asoka does not know to bend himself before the wishes of these mindless

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priests. Tell them that I am not like their King Ramachandra of Ramayana to abandon an innocent goddess-like wife, Sita, to satisfy some ignorant subjects. I shall rule without a crown as long as I hold my sceptre. Let the priests go to hell with their scriptures, with their fanaticism and intolerance towards other faiths and religions of this great country of Bharat.''

He goes out in hurry.

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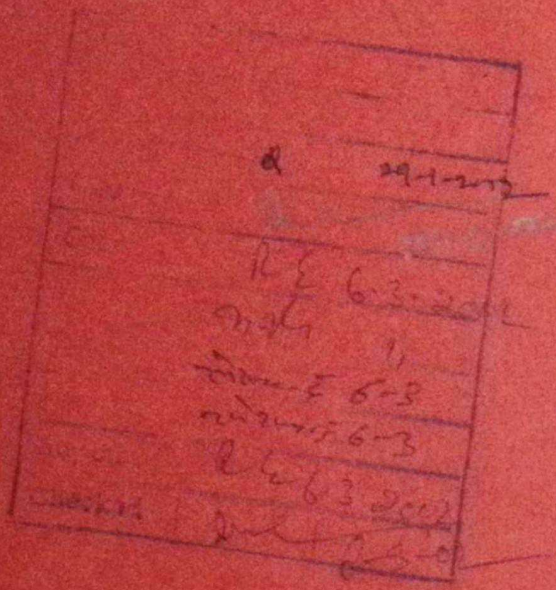

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